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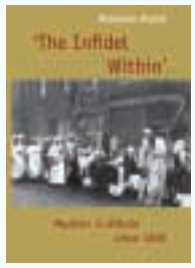

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Editorial Office
Visiting Address
Rapenburg 59
Leiden
Postal Address
ISIM, P.O. Box 11089
2301 EB Leiden
The Netherlands
Telephone
+31 (0)71 527 7905
Fax:
+31 (0)71 527 7906
E-mail
review@isim.nl
Homepage
www.isim.nl

Editors
Dick Douwes
Linda Herrera
Copy and language editor
Sanaa Makhlouf
Desk editor
Dennis Janssen
Design
De Kreeft, Amsterdam
Printing
Dijkman Offset, Diemen

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Editorial

DICK DOUWES &
LINDA HERRERA

Western Europe has been struggling to accommodate its Muslim migrants. Politicians and opinion makers often display irritation towards Muslim citizens and those (non-Muslims) who call for reason and restraint in the ever-prevailing critical policy and media debates on Islam. In the Netherlands Islam became publicly visible from the late-1980s following family reunion programmes which allowed women and children from countries such as Morocco and Turkey to join their husbands and fathers. Although Muslims faced some criticism during that period, Islam-bashing only later became a political fashion when Pim Fortuyn put Islam – in his observation a backward culture - on the political agenda. After his violent death and the ensuing spectacular electoral results of his populist party politicians and intellectuals exploited his legacy and came to dominate the Dutch debate. One of the most outspoken critics, Somali born activist and parliamentarian Ayaan Hirsi Ali, publicly denounced her Islamic faith (see Moors, p. 8 and Ghorashi, p. 10).

Muslim voices are hardly ever heard in the debate, partly due to the intolerant posture of many of their critics who actively try to limit the space for divergent views, and partly because of the lack of Muslim spokespersons sufficiently backed by the larger community (who speak the language of their opponents). This unbalanced situation has created room for radical and marginal groups to articulate what it means to be Muslim, to the detriment of the more moderate and mainstream voices. The Islam critics have subsequently—and gratuitously—used these voices as proof of their basic assumption that Islam tends toward radicalism and impedes its adherents from becoming responsible citizens. While Islamist radicalism undoubtedly exists in Europe, most Muslims have ordinary daily concerns revolving around family, work, education, relationships, and the future. Yet, by virtue of being Muslim, or Moroccan, or Turkish, or accent speaking, or headscarf wearing, they are assumed to endanger the status quo and are incessantly confronted with demands to denounce, for example, radical imams, jihadist Internet sites, and extremist groups.

The brutal murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a seemingly integrated Dutch citizen of Moroccan origin has made matters worse in that it strengthened the idea that the existence of Muslim communities as a whole constitutes a security risk and that multiculturalism has unequivocally failed.

ISIM NEWSLETTER

NAME CHANGE

The name of the ***ISIM Newsletter*** has been changed to the ***ISIM Review*** to more accurately reflect the publication's objective of providing a review of debates and research on contemporary Muslim societies and communities in an accessible manner to a broad readership.

Yet, as Olivier Roy so astutely argues, Islamic radicalism in Europe should not be viewed as the result of an inherent inflexibility in the culture of Muslim immigrants. Rather, radicalization can be understood as a process of "de-culturalization" of religion in which westernized Muslims and converts "endeavour to reconstruct a 'pure' religion outside traditional or Western cultures, outside the very concept of culture itself." (Roy, p. 6). Seen in this light, one pauses to seriously question the efficacy of disciplining governmental projects for integration currently underway in several European countries. It would seem that policies that strive to provide more equitable access to education and labour markets could serve much more productive ends. It is also becoming more evident that secure spaces for Muslim and other voices to participate in public debates need to be better preserved.

Within a growing climate of alarmist politics, pluralistic democratic spaces for public discussion and debate about and by Muslims in Europe are narrowing. Attempts are being made to silence, rather than engage with, the spectrum of voices. An example of the reluctance to offer adequate space to divergent opinions can be found in the case of Tariq Ramadan. A Swiss citizen of Egyptian background, Ramadan's popularity among Muslim youths in Europe has been steadily growing, yet he is met with suspicion by the political and intellectual elite. For reasons never made clear, the US authorities denied Ramadan the permit to take up a professorship at Notre Dame University, in France his talks are regularly cancelled at the last moment, and a media campaign has been underway to keep him out of the country. In January 2005 the French ambassador to the Netherlands put strong pressure on the organizers and panellists of a public debate in The Hague to cancel Ramadan's participation. Whatever one's opinion of Ramadan—and the opinions vary widely—the attempts to restrict his appearances—without providing any clear explanation as to why—raise serious questions about knowledge production and control and appear entirely incompatible with principles of democratic transparency and civic freedoms. As Beshara Doumani cautions (p. 22-23), knowledge production, particularly when it relates to Islam and Muslim societies, is undergoing new challenges and modes of censorship. An open society can only be safeguarded by maintaining spaces for critical inquiry and debate.

ISIM

The International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) conducts and promotes interdisciplinary research on social, political, cultural, and intellectual trends and movements in contemporary Muslim societies and communities. The ISIM was established in 1998 by the University of Amsterdam, Leiden University, Utrecht University, and Radboud University Nijmegen in response to a need for further research on contemporary developments of great social, political, and cultural importance in the Muslim world from social science and humanities perspectives. The ISIM's research approaches are expressly interdisciplinary and comparative, covering a large geographic range which includes North Africa, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South and South East Asia, and Muslim communities in the West. Broad in scope, the ISIM brings together all areas of disciplinary expertise in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, political science, and cultural studies.

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The ISIM will be relocating its offices in Leiden to **Rapenburg 59** as of **1 April 2005**.

ISIM Newsletter 14

A Culture of Righteousness and Martyrdom

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Left Behind Graphic Novel

Dear Dr Colla,

I read with interest your article, "A Culture of Righteousness and Martyrdom," in the *ISIM Newsletter* 14. While I share fully in your opposition to American crusaderism, the article fails to demonstrate a concrete connection between the eschatological fantasies of the *Left Behind* series and the actual outworking of U.S. policy towards the Islamic Middle East, if that was your purpose. It is of course true, and has been proved down to the ground, that evangelical Christians in the U.S. are overwhelmingly pro-Zionist, and that this has had some impact on both the attitudes of Congresspersons and on the strength of U.S. support for Israel. However, it seems to me more likely that popularity of the *Left Behind* series is just a momentary reflection of enduring millenarian convictions about the place of the Middle East in the "end-times," rather than actually contributing to some kind of new American culture of martyrdom. Don't forget that Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* was selling like hotcakes in the 1970s, long before September 11 or the Taliban or the Iraq war—and the theology of the *Left Behind* series is really just warmed-over Lindsey.

For the record, I am myself evangelical in conviction but do not accept the eschatology of the *Left Behind* authors. I abhor Israeli policy toward the Palestinians and do what I can to advocate the justice of Palestinian demands, as do other evangelical Christians in, for example, Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, an organization devoted to building supportive links to the churches of the Middle East and promoting an historically informed view of the Palestine conflict. This is just to say that the evangelical "community" in the U.S. and abroad is so large that there is considerably more theological and political diversity than is often imagined.

I am also troubled by your incorporation of Mel Gibson's film as indicative of a martyr cum crusader complex that is specifically American, and your linking it at all with the *Left Behind* series. First, it is worth remembering that Gibson is Roman Catholic, and that while evangelicals did turn out for the film in large numbers, so did Catholics and Orthodox Christians, both in the U.S. and throughout the world. I live in Egypt, where Coptic Christians were very enthusiastic about the film, and of course there were many thousands of appreciative Muslim viewers here as well. Secondly, Jewish anxiety about the film was based on an assessment of the film as, politically, at the polar opposite of the *Left Behind* series with its implicit pro-Zionism, since Gibson's film allegedly portrayed the Jews as villains. Of course, the fear was that the film would stoke the old antipathy toward Jews as Christ-killers, although I don't think there's any evidence to show that it did. Third, there is in your article, and in the editorial, a tendency to equate all forms of "martyrdom" in the various religions of the Middle East and connect them vaguely with the valorization of violence. But it is simply not true that "martyr" means the same thing in all religions at all times and all places. In this context, it should be recalled that "martyr" in the traditional Christian understanding refers to someone who suffers passively in the service of God, or for the sake of conscience, and who emphatically does not resort to any kind of violent aggression or resistance, hence the *passio Christi* depicted very movingly in Gibson's film.

Yours sincerely,

Michael J. Reimer
Associate Professor
Department of History
American University in Cairo

Elliott Colla's response

Dear Dr Reimer,

I appreciate your points. While I agree with some, I disagree with others. First, in terms of "causality" or "influence," we cannot say with any empirical exactness the degree to which evangelical theology (especially of the different strands of millenarianism) is shaping the Middle East foreign policy of the Bush administration. I attempted to use language that showed that such theology is "informing" (rather than commanding) the thought, and probably even some aspects of policy. It may be difficult living outside the US right now to see how popular millenarian evangelical thinking is, but from my perspective, living here, I have seen it move from the margins to the mainstream since 9-11. It hasn't hurt that Bush, Ashcroft, and others in the administration invoke, in their public addresses, language that is meant to resound with their evangelical church membership.

If there was a big point to my wanting to write on those novels it was this: I wanted to say that if there were similar millenarian novels geared for Muslim audiences, and if these novels were popular in Riyadh or Tehran, you can bet that the US media would be making a big deal about them as an example of Islam's "culture of intolerance and hatred." In other words, one of the things that most fascinated me was the post-9-11 cultural context which allowed these novels to move from a marginal readership to mainstream blockbusters.

With regard to the *Left Behind* series, it's abundantly clear that they're not offered, nor are they being read as pure fiction. I encourage you to look at the *Newsweek* issue with Tim LaHaye on the cover (24 May 2004, U.S. edition). One of the most interesting points covered was how the publication of a volume in the series was speeded up after the 9/11 attacks. It went on to be the top novel in sales for all of 2001. There's also a powerful picture in that article of a GI in Iraq reading a *Left Behind* novel. A spokesman for the US Armed Forces mentioned that the "military series" of *Left Behind* were given away en masse to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. I can't help but wonder if some soldiers reading these books aren't thinking they're involved in the first stages of Armageddon.

As for including Mel Gibson's film in the piece, it seems fair to read Gibson's *Passion* and the *Left Behind* series as part of a single, deeper cultural narrative about the inequity of the world and the comfort that God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous. That these texts are circulating at a moment in which Americans portray themselves as innocent victims of evil terror (rather than as victims of a terrorist attack that took place within a history of violence in which the US government has been a major participant) seems significant. The relationship between images of innocents suffering and the desire for just retribution seems to me to be a key part of what righteousness is all about. Believe me, Americans—especially Evangelical ones—are feeling pretty righteous about the violence that US forces are bringing to the Middle East right now. I don't expect you to agree with my interpretation, but I hope that my reading is a bit clearer now.

Best wishes,

Elliott Colla

MEMRI

Dear Editors,

I was surprised to see MEMRI cited as a reliable source of information in the editorial of the June issue of the *ISIM Newsletter*. Reactions to *The Passion of Christ* in the Arab world are certainly worth study, but MEMRI, an organization co-founded by a former Israeli intelligence officer, is the last place such a study should be done. MEMRI devotes its efforts to seeking out the most bizarre and rabid articles from the Arab press and presenting them as mainstream public opinion. MEMRI's main goal, it seems, is to document, and frequently, to exaggerate rising levels of anti-Semitism in the Arab world, and its analysis of Mel Gibson's controversial film can only be viewed in light of this agenda. In short, despite its claims to be a "non-partisan" translation service, MEMRI is primarily a political propaganda tool, not a scholarly reference source.

Among the many critiques of MEMRI's origins and bias is Brian Whitaker's "Selective Memri" (Aug. 12, 2002) in the Guardian: http://www.guardian.co.uk/elsewhere/journalist/story/0%2C7792%2C773258%2C00.html

Sincerely,

Mark Pettigrew
Berkeley, CA

Response

Dear Mr Pettigrew,

Thank-you very much for your message concerning MEMRI and for providing *The Guardian* link which we have since read. We made reference to the MEMRI source without a full awareness of the background of the organization.

The Editors

Letters to the Editors can be sent to review@isim.nl and should include the author's name and affiliation.

A Clash of Cultures or a Debate on Europe's Values?

OLIVIER ROY

The murder of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands (2 November 2004) represents a recent example of how westernized Muslims and converts have been implicated in acts associated with Islamic radicalism in Europe. Despite widespread interpretations that Islamic radicalization represents the failure of the multiculturalists approach vis-à-vis Muslim immigrants, radicalism can better be explained as the consequence of de-culturation and globalization. Radicals endeavour to reconstruct a "pure" religion outside traditional or Western cultures, outside the very concept of culture itself.

The murder of Theo van Gogh, which sent a shock wave through the Netherlands, has been largely interpreted as the proof of an obvious failure of the multiculturalist approach that prevailed in the country at least until the electoral success of Pim Fortuyn in 2002. The crime appeared as the exacerbated expression of an Arab or "Muslim" culture unable to accept Western values. This could have been true, were the murderer and his accomplices traditional Muslims, barely able to speak Dutch and from a tight-knit closed community of immigrants. But Van Gogh's alleged killer, Mohammed B, is a Dutch citizen, although born into a migrant family from Morocco. Two of those arrested —Jason W. and Jermaine W.— are Dutch-American converts to Islam.

Trajectories of Muslim radicalization in Europe

Developments in the Netherlands have been very much in line with developments in the rest of Europe. Since the end of the 1980's, both the Islam-related violence and the identity patterns of radicals, have corresponded to similar trends throughout Europe. The Bradford demonstrations against Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (January 1988) represented the first open claim by Muslims living in the West that Islam should be protected in Europe against "blasphemy," although the fatwa against Rushdie was launched by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran for purely political reasons. In the summers of 1994 and 1995 a string of terrorist actions had also been perpetrated by Islamic radicals in France. Many young European Muslims joined different jihads in the world (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir and, more recently, Iraq), and, although not all of them became terrorists, some did join al-Qaida (Zacarias Moussaoui, Richard Reid). There have been some twenty European Muslims jailed in Guantanamo; even if many of them did not have direct connections with al-Qaida, they nevertheless all went to fight alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan. Many terrorist actions have been perpetrated or planned by young Muslims living in the West: the 9/11 pilots, the "Roubaix gang" (1996), the Jamal Beghal network (2001), the Hamburg cell (accused of having provided logistical support to the 9/11 attack), even the group responsible for the Madrid deadly bombings of 2004, share common patterns.

The process of radicalization among second generation Muslims in Western Europe is therefore nothing new. They fall roughly into three categories: 1) second generation young males whose families usually originated from North-Africa, 2) young men who came from North Africa or the Middle-East and settled in the West either to study or to work, 3) converts who are often outcasts (non-Muslim racial minorities, usually black and/or Caribbean, former delinquents converted in jail, drug-addicts who found in Islam a way to quit addiction, or just "buddies" who joined their Muslim friends when the latter became "born-again"). All of them are fully westernized and usually keep aloof from the mainstream Muslims.[1] The murder of Van Gogh was a consequence of the merging of two trends: the call to fight blasphemy, and the jumping of young westernized Muslims into "international jihadism."

The westernization of these young radicals is obvious from many points: they are fluent in Western languages (and often do not speak Arabic), they often have citizenship in a Western country (Moussaoui, Mohammed B.), marry European women (Daoudi, Beghal), have a Western parent (the mother of Abdelkrim Mejjati, the Madrid ring leader, is French), and are born-again. Few if any went to a religious school. The weight of converts in radical groups should never be underestimated: almost all radical and violent networks dismantled in Europe during the last ten years had at least one convert (Reid, Grandvizir, Courtailler, Ganczarski, to name a few). The group responsible for Van Gogh's murder seems to fit these patterns: Mohammed B. speaks fluent Dutch, is a Dutch citizen, and is obviously a "born again," who had a "normal" life until he became a fanatic; the other Moroccans involved in the case settled in Europe. Finally, we should note the presence of the converts, embodied by the two sons of a US black military officer and a Dutch woman, who went to Pakistan for religious and military training.

The de-culturalization of religion

The uproar generated in the Netherlands by the murder concentrates on the issue of "multiculturalism," which is now expressed in terms of a clash of cultures, although nobody can explain why no "traditional Muslim," but only westernized Muslims and converts, were involved in the act. The answer is that what has been seen as an exception (a fanatical westernized Muslim) is precisely the norm: the more radical the terrorists, the more they do not embody a traditional culture or a culture at all. Islamic radicalization is a consequence of deculturation and not the expression of a pristine culture. It is an endeavour to reconstruct a "pure" religion outside traditional or Western cultures, outside the very concept of culture itself.

All the present forms of Islamic religious radicalization (which I call "neo-fundamentalism," and which do not necessarily entail violence or political radicalization), are both a product and an agent of deculturation and globalization. The Taliban in Afghanistan did not fight to defend a traditional culture against Western encroachments: on the contrary, they were initially on good terms with the US government and fought first of all against the traditional Afghan culture (I take the term culture here both in the sense of arts and literature, and in the anthropological sense of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, beliefs, institutions). In the Muslim world, Salafis and Tablighis, whatever their differences, are all fighting against traditional Muslim cultures, accused of having distorted the pure Islam of its origins. Such a predication is very successful among segments of deculturated second generation Muslims, who find in it an apology and a vindication of their own uprootedness: they prefer halal fast-food to traditional Muslim cuisines. The generation gap, coupled with a sense of disenfranchising, became suddenly of some value: the more they ignored their grandfather's Islam, the more they had an opportunity to become "true Muslims." Individualization of faith, self-teaching, generational gap, rejection of authority (including that of established religious leaders), loosening of family ties, lack of socialization with a broader community (including the ethnic community of their parents), and withdrawal towards a small inward-looking group, akin to

a cult: all these factors show the extent of the process of deculturation of the radicals.

The quest for authenticity is no longer a quest to maintain a pristine identity, but to go back to and beyond this pristine identity through a non-historical, abstract, and imagined model of Islam. It is not an issue of nostalgia for a given country, for one's youth or for family roots. In this sense, "westernization" means something other than becoming Western, hence the ambivalent attitude towards it. But such behaviours do not necessarily lead to violence, although they provide a fertile ground. There are two elements that could explain the violence. The first issue is that such radicals are not linked to any real community. Their community is not rooted in a given society or culture, and hence has to be reconstructed and experienced as an act of faith. They refer to a virtual ummah (community of believers) whose existence relies on their behaviour and deeds. The obsession about blasphemy and apostasy goes along with the vanishing of the social authority of Islam. The "dreamed" community becomes a "nightmared" one. The issue of "boundary" comes to the fore. By slaughtering a "blasphemer" Mohammed B. literally inscribed the boundary on his victim's throat. Do not trespass.

PHOTO BY ISCHA WILLEMS / © ANP, 2004

Portions of letter left on Theo van Gogh's body by the killer

If we examine patterns of other terrorists we can observe a different and more political approach: their targets are the same as the traditional targets of the Western ultra-left of the seventies (US imperialism), and not Christianity as such. Even if they achieved a level of mass murder unknown to their predecessors, they still followed the path opened by Baader Meinhof, the Red Brigades, and Carlos. The proponents of the "clash of civilizations" should look at the footages of the hostage takings in Iraq: the "trial" of a blind-folded hostage under the banner of a radical organization, the "confession" of the hostage, followed by his execution, are literally borrowed from the staging technique of the Italian Red Brigades when they captured and killed the former Prime minister Aldo Moro in 1978.

Beyond multiculturalism

Nevertheless, the reaction of the Dutch society overwhelmingly interpreted the murder of Van Gogh in terms of the failure of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has suddenly been seen as negative. But going from positive to negative means that the intellectual paradigm of multiculturalism is still at work. Multiculturalism has obviously failed, but for a different reason: the culture one is referring to is disappearing and this is the real cause of violence. At a time when the territorial borders between the great civilizations are fading away, mental borders are being reinvented to give a second life to the ghost of lost civilizations: multiculturalism, minority groups, clash or dialogue of civilizations, communautarisation and so on. Ethnicity and religion are called to draw new borders between groups whose identity relies on a performative definition: we are what we say we are, or what others say we are. These new ethnic and religious borders do not correspond to any geographical territory or area. They work in minds, attitudes, and discourses. They are more vocal than territorial, but also so much more eagerly endorsed and defended because they have to be invented, and because they remain fragile and transitory. De-territorialization of Islam leads to a quest for definition, because Islam is no longer embedded in territorial cultures, whatever their diversity, which is, by the way, always experienced from outside.

The crisis of the concept of culture is also obvious in the West. It is interesting to see how the way Islam is perceived as a threat is different from one European country to the other. In France the "headscarf affair" amounted to a debate on French national identity, while the idea that veiled schoolgirls are a problem is just seen as silly in Great Britain. This does not mean that Great Britain is more tolerant than France: in the UK it is strictly forbidden to slaughter animals the "halal" way, while in France it has never been a problem. The issue of animal protection in Northern Europe is almost a civilizational one (nobody seems to have given thought to the fact that Pim Fortuyn was killed by an animal rights activist). The language issue is also complex. In France and Great Britain, Muslims do speak the language of their host European country, and often before their arrival to Europe. In Holland many do not, although if they plan to stay in the country they must follow "enculturation courses" which include intensive language instruction. The issue, then, is not so much integration into Europe, but the status of the different European languages. Islam arrives in Europe at a time when European integration is weakening the political dimension of national identities. The traditional nation-states are fading away. At the same time, at the grass roots level, national cohesion seems also to vanish due to the consequences of immigration. European identities are in a process of recasting and new terms such as "Englishness," "Dutchness," "Frenchness" are emerging.

Europe historically used two models to deal with immigration: assimilationism (France) and multiculturalism (Northern Europe). Both failed for the same reason: they ignored the de-linking of culture and religion. France rightly considered that imported cultures would fade away, but wrongly asserted that this would lead to individual assimilation. Northern Europe considered that pristine cultures would be steady enough to maintain a cohesive community, which could keep the new generation under some sort of social control. It also failed in favour of a purely religious identity. In both cases, what emerges is a call to be recognized as "Muslims" and no more as "immigrants," or as a "cultural minority." This means that, although the initial approaches were very different, Europe is now facing the same challenge: how to deal with Islam as a "mere" religion. But the emergence of Islam as a mere religion does not create a divide between "East" and "West" but a realignment between conservative and religious values on one hand, versus progressive and liberal ideas on the other hand. But values are not the expression of a given culture.

When Pim Fortuyn entered politics in the Netherlands on an anti-Islamic agenda, it was not to defend traditional European values, but to protect the homosexual rights that had been won in the 1970s against a conservative Christian tradition. Interestingly enough, the Moroccan Imam el-Moumni, who triggered Fortuyn's anger by saying in a radio broadcast that homosexuality is a disease and has to do with bestiality, was not in line with traditional ulama, for whom homosexuality is a sin and thus should be punished by death. By calling it a disease, he took the same line as the Catholic church in modern times: exonerating the homosexual of sin as long as he does not practise it, but refusing to give him any legal rights as a homosexual, which, in the eyes of the church, is a modern and benevolent position.

The debate with Islam is in fact a European search for a European soul.

Note

1. See my *Globalised Islam* (London: Hurst & Co., 2004), Chap. 7; see also Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terrorist Networks* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University press, 2004).

Olivier Roy is Research Director, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, and author of *Globalised Islam* (London: Hurst & Co., 2004).
Email: oroy@compuserve.com

Submission

ANNELIES MOORS

The film *Submission*, written by Hirsi Ali and filmed by the late Theo van Gogh, was aired on Dutch television in the summer of 2004. Some have referred to the film as a work of art while others have stressed its offensive nature due to its portrayal of violence against Muslim women. Yet the film is first and foremost striking in its unimaginative resonance with the visual imagery of Orientalism.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, activist, publicist, and Member of Parliament, appeared on Dutch television in the prime-time programme *Zomergasten* (Summer Guests) for the first time on 29 August 2004. Broadcast in the low of the summer season, *Zomergasten* is a "high-quality" programme in which the host has over three hours to interview one guest about various facets of his or her personal and public life. To facilitate the conversation, guests to this programme are invited to select a number of brief television or film clips that have special significance to them. The last clip Hirsi Ali chose to air was *Submission,* the twelve-minute film for which she herself had written the script. Publicity for the film had started the day before the broadcast when the *NRC*, a Dutch up-scale newspaper, published a full two-page portrait of Hirsi Ali in which she announced the airing of *Submission*. An unusually high number of over 750,000 households watched this instalment of *Zomergasten*.

Hirsi Ali is a Somalia-born refugee who, in an attempt to avoid an arranged marriage, settled in the Netherlands and later became involved in Dutch party politics through the Labour Party (PvdA). She became increasingly disenchanted with its stance on multiculturalism that she saw as too soft on Muslims, with Muslim women paying the price. In a much-publicized move, she left the social democrat PvdA in 2002 to join the right-wing People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) which received her with open arms; in 2003 she became a member of parliament for this party. Raised as a Muslim, she has publicly declared that she no longer is a believer, but points to the fact that she knows from experience how oppressive Islam can be for women. She rapidly turned into a highly controversial public figure because of her outspoken criticism of Islam. While in some circles she has reached celebrity status, she has also received many death threats and had to go into hiding after the murder of Theo van Gogh on 2 November 2004.

The film

Submission was written by Hirsi Ali and filmed by the late Theo van Gogh, a filmmaker and columnist well-know for his highly controversial style of criticizing Christians, Jews, and, especially, Muslims. The film opens with a prayer and then presents, through Hirsi Ali's voice-over, the stories of four women addressing God about the abuse they have suffered at the hands of men. These stories vary from forced marriage and incestuous rape to domestic violence and penal lashings because of sexual relations outside of marriage. The film has drawn public attention more due to its form than its content; images of women in transparent dress with Quranic verses calligraphed on their skin, covered with traces of whiplashes and beatings, cut through the narratives.

In making *Submission* Hirsi Ali and Van Gogh were well-aware of the power of the visual. Although some have referred to the film as a work of art, it is first and foremost striking in its unimaginative resonance with the visual imagery of Orientalism. Hirsi Ali's argument that she opted for a transparent veil in order to show the audience that there is a person, a woman of flesh and blood, underneath sounds hollow and overlooks long standing Western conventions of representations of the Orient. Simultaneously covering and revealing the female body through the use of transparent forms of dress or veiling has not only been a trope of Orientalist painting but also of representations of the erotic and the exotic in popular visual imagery. Allowing the viewer to scrutinize women's bodies while simultaneously covering their faces and using the technique of a voice-over disables processes of identification and turns these women into the generic category of "the oppressed Muslim woman." The visual language of tortured female bodies and Quranic calligraphy, with a text that does not leave much to be imagined, turns the film into a pamphlet preaching to the converted.

It is hard to avoid reading *Submission* as a film whose main message is that Islam is bad for women. The film has all the characteristics of hard core Orientalism. If, in its visual language, women's bodies are eroticized through a discourse of seduction and pain, the spoken texts refer to a more academic form of Orientalism that sees people's everyday lives as determined by Islam, providing a direct link between specific Quranic verses and the behaviour of Muslim men who abuse women. In an odd convergence with fundamentalist thought, Hirsi Ali sees the meaning of Quranic verses as one-dimensional, only allowing for one possible interpretation, the one that is most harmful to women. Muslim men are then seen as taken to abuse their wives because of the content of these Quranic verses. While some may indeed legitimate their violent behaviour towards women with such references, arguing that Quranic verses are the cause of their behaviour is something entirely different. Furthermore, the film seriously misrepresents Islamic teachings; for instance, even the most conservative religious scholars would not be able to legitimize incestuous rape on Islamic grounds. Although Hirsi Ali has stated that it is not her intention to make others give up their religion, her presentation of violence against women as part of the essence of Islam and her use of a generalizing language that defines women first and foremost as victims of their own religion, makes it difficult to draw another conclusion.

What sort of reactions did Hirsi Ali and Van Gogh expect? Although Hirsi Ali did not like the title of the *NRC* article announcing *Submission* as "A new provocation by Hirsi Ali," she was very well aware of the fact that the film would give rise to controversy. In her words, "The whole of the Muslim world will criticize me." Van Gogh himself, finding the film a bit boring and overly serious, said his next film would need to have more humour. He seems to have engaged in the film project for the sake of Hirsi Ali. Jokingly, he also referred to a worst-case scenario in which Muslims would simply ignore the film.

At first, the fears of Van Gogh almost seemed to materialize. In spite of the obvious attempts of the media to get sensational responses from Muslim organizations, the latter either chose not to respond at all to the film, or did so in a restrained manner. By and large they regretted that such a film was made, but there was no concerted action on their part to get the film banned, as many had expected.[1] Most agreed that the topic —violence against women— was indeed relevant, but many were not convinced by the analysis and most pointed out that the visual language of Quranic verses and transparent dress was counter-productive. The responses of individuals varied from praise to outrage, with very few reactions from the target group, Muslim women themselves. In a televised discussion of Hirsi Ali with a number of abused women in a shelter, the latter walked out as an expression of offence by Hirsi Ali's injunction that they needed to acknowledge that the Quran condones the abuse of women. Interviews conducted by Amnesty International correspondents with professional women in Muslim communities abroad —as the film was made in English, evidence of it being intended for an audience abroad— also were by and large negative.

It was not until after the murder of Van Gogh that *Submission* again became the topic of debate. Hirsi Ali sent a letter to the *NRC* in which she stated that she felt guilty that Van Gogh had been killed because of his cooperation with her in producing the film.[2] In the days after his murder "the friends of Van Gogh" and others made a passionate plea for the right of freedom of opinion, translated in terms of an absolute right to say "whatever we want." There were good reasons for such a "translation." Van Gogh had not been as much a major opinion-leader but as a a public figure due to his style of provoking and insulting, the vulgarity of his language, and his use of ethnic slurs, with Muslims consistently referred to in terms of bestiality. A host of intellectuals joined his anti-civil discourse with great zeal, claiming they were preserving "Dutch norms and values" which they perceived as being under threat by the presence of "almost one million Muslims" in the Netherlands. The right to insult seems to have become one of those central Dutch values. It was within this context that *Submission* was time and again

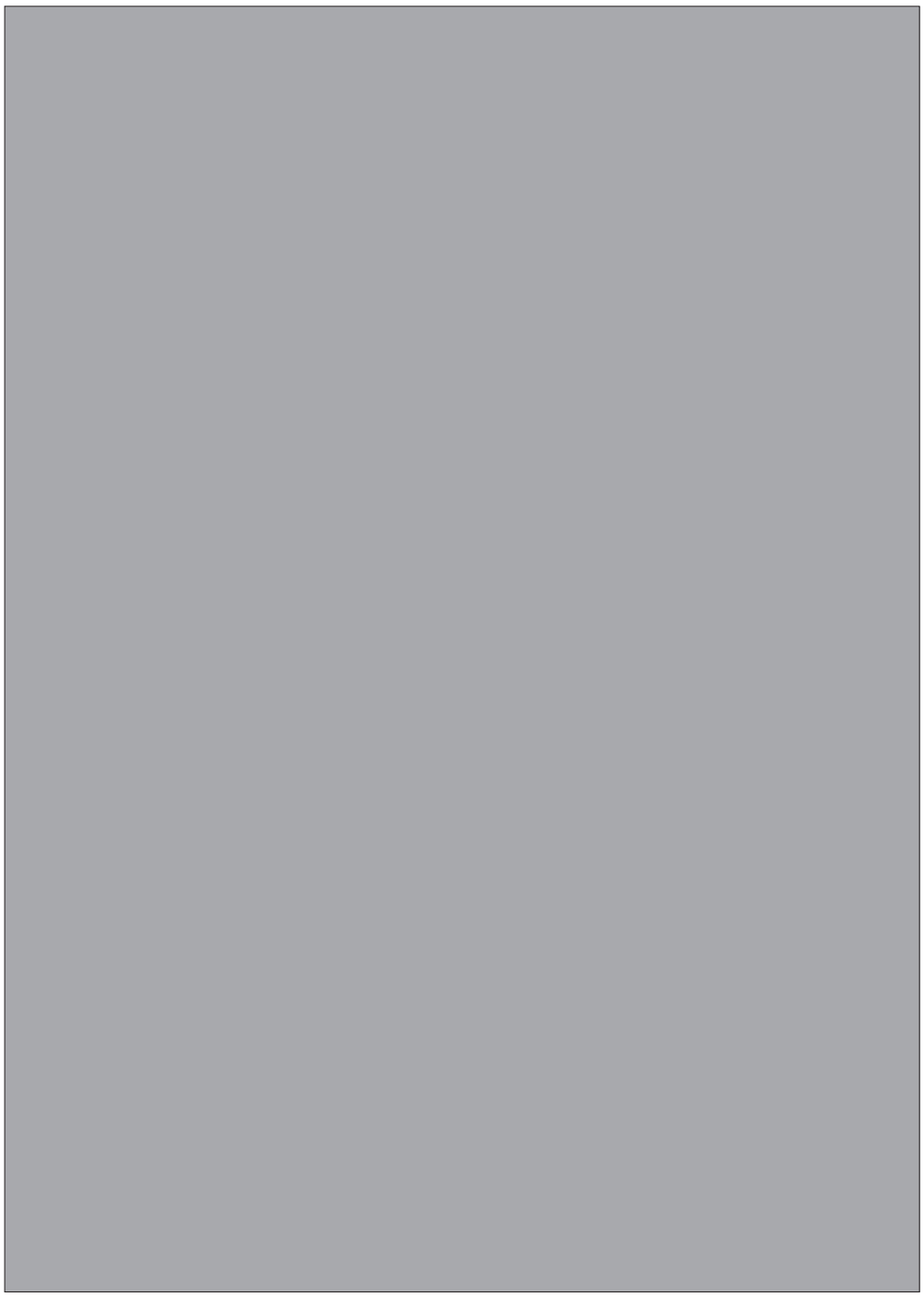

PHOTO BY THOMAS KIST / ©ANP, 2004

Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Theo van Gogh on the set of *Submission*

referred to as a prime example of the right of freedom of expression that needed to be defended. As if to underline this point, some argued for an immediate second airing of *Submission*. The company holding the film rights, however, refused permission to air it on the day of Van Gogh's cremation, giving as its reason that it would draw attention away from his earlier and more interesting work.

Faced with criticism about her generalizing discourse, Hirsi Ali has in various interviews and talk shows acknowledged that only a minority of Muslim men beat their wives, that there are also positive elements in Islam, and has pointed out that she only wants to remove from Islam those elements that are incompatible with human rights and individual freedom. Still, her stance remains highly ambiguous, for she often simultaneously presents contrasting positions. When, almost one month after the murder of Van Gogh she presented her plans for another film, *Submission 2* (about the ways in which Islam oppresses the individual, starting from the position of women) and for a book, she stated that whereas people admit behind closed doors that Islamism is dangerous, she herself considers Islam in its purest form, the Islam of the prophet Mohammed, of the Quran and the hadith, as a threat to life.[3]

The Dutch elite

Hirsi Ali has been seen as a lone voice willing to take great personal risks to reveal the cruelty Islam inflicts on women that others had tried to cover up. It is certainly true that she has taken great risks, but the presentation of her position in Dutch society as a lone voice is remarkable. Whereas she does not have much support amongst Muslims, men or women, she finds herself in the company of very powerful political players. She stands in a tradition of Islam bashers that have become increasingly influential in Dutch society, starting with Frits Bolkestein, former European Commissioner and former leader of the VVD, one of the first in the early 1990s to argue that Islam and modernity are incompatible and that a strong anti-migration stance is needed. Her ideas are also similar to those of the more populist discourse of the late Pim Fortuyn who considered Islam a backward religion. Her move from the Labour party to the VVD was facilitated by former Minister of Transport and currently the European Commissioner for Competition Neelie Kroes and former VVD party leader and present vice- Prime Minister Gerrit Zalm, whose consent she sought (and gained) in airing *Submission*.

She is also strongly supported by intellectuals who more often than not are self-proclaimed experts on Islam, the Arab world, and women, and who present their rehashings of Orientalist perspectives with an awe of respectability through their stature. Likewise, another major supporter of Hirsi Ali's work is the Editor-in-Chief of the Dutch mainstream feminist monthly *Opzij*, Cisca Dresselhuys, who publicly declared that while she might consider hiring a woman wearing a headscarf for an administrative position, she would not hire such a woman as a journalist, for, in her eyes, wearing a headscarf cannot be but the expression of women's subordination and hence it clashes with the feminist mission of *Opzij*. Dresselhuys compares Hirsi Ali's confrontational style with that of Dutch feminists of the 1960s. This analogy, however, seems to miss the point. While feminists of the 1960s attacked the male power elite, Hirsi Ali finds her support there; her confrontational stance has been vis-a-vis Muslims (and those "soft on them"), a disproportionately underprivileged if not disenfranchised social group.

This is not to say that Hirsi Ali has not raised important issues; she may even have put sensitive issues on the agenda of a party that otherwise would have ignored them. Yet, her film *Submission* is not only ineffective in that it by and large alienates her intended audience, but it also has negative side effects. Whereas immediately after the murder of Van Gogh, the mayor of Amsterdam underlined the importance of uniting together all who are against violence, *Submission* builds on and contributes to further polarization along the lines of the simplistic contrast scheme of Muslims versus non-Muslims. Violence against women is certainly an important issue to address,[4] but it would have been far more productive to acknowledge the work Muslim feminists have done in order to develop alternative interpretations, and to investigate causes and possible solutions for men's abusive behaviour rather than to assume a simple causal link with Islamic texts.

Annelies Moors is an anthropologist and holds the ISIM chair at the University of Amsterdam.
E-mail: a.c.a.e.moors@uva.nl

Notes

1. When Hirsi Ali announced that she intended to make a follow up to *Submission* some Muslims went to court to seek a court injunction to stop her from doing so.
2. Hirsi Ali strongly criticized the fact that she, as Member of Parliament, was entitled to police protection while Theo van Gogh was not. The issue of police protection then became an issue of debate in parliament.
3. See *NRC*, November 29, 2004.
4. There are quite a number of films produced in Muslim majority countries on the very topic of violence against women, one example being Subhi al-Zobaidi's, *Women in the Sun* (Palestine: Refugee Camp Production), that includes the testimonies of the women concerned, as well as debates between female activists and religious scholars.

Multiculturalism and Citizenship in the Netherlands

HALLEH GHORASHI

The discourse on multiculturalism in the Netherlands dates to the arrival of the so-called "guest workers" in the late 1950s. By the 1980s, when the Dutch government realized that migration, initially viewed as temporary, had gained a more permanent character, it started to focus on the integration of the immigrants.[1]

Post-war economic growth and the need for unskilled labour forced the Dutch government to look beyond its borders, fostering labour contracts first with Italy and Spain, and later with Turkey and Morocco. The migrants from Muslim majority countries were seen as especially problematic for integration into the Dutch society. Their low economic position and social isolation made them both the underclass citizens of the Dutch society and the scapegoats for the ills of society. Rightwing political movements, represented early on in the ideas of Bolkestein and the People's Party for Democracy and Freedom (VVD), cast immigrants as uneducated, uncivilized, criminal, and dangerous, and emphasized the need for the state to deal with them with "toughness." In his view the only way to preserve Western values and achievements was to leave politically correct attitudes behind and pressure immigrants to completely integrate into Dutch society. Although many distanced themselves from Bolkestein's approach, he was able, for the first time, to provide a public space from which to argue against the previously dominant "toleration of difference" discourse. By the year 2000 the assimilative discourse on migration became the dominant discourse on migration in the Netherlands, and after 11 September 2001 the climate became even more anti-Muslim.

The appearance of Pim Fortuyn onto the political landscape as the leader of the newly established *Leefbaar Nederland* party (Liveable Netherlands) would further change the debates around immigration. His party eventually disassociated itself with him and his statements such as "Islam is a backward culture." Fortuyn therefore founded his own party, *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) which won the largest number of seats in the municipal elections of Rotterdam. His party was up for elections in the National Parliament when, on 6 May 2002, Fortuyn was murdered by an animal rights activist. With Fortuyn the political discourse around migrants, particularly Muslim migrants, became more polarized than ever before.

Debates on Islam in the Netherlands

I came to the Netherlands as a refugee sixteen years ago from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although I experienced political (as a leftist) and gender (as a woman) suppression in the name of Islam, I have learned that Islam as a religion should not be blamed for the acts of a repressive regime. By practising democracy in the Netherlands I have learned to respect people for their thoughts as long as those thoughts are not forced on me. And it is here that I have come to differ from Ayaan Hirsi Ali, arguably one of the most controversial politicians today on Islam in the Netherlands.

Born in 1967 in Mogadishu (Somalia), Ayaan Hirsi Ali also came to the Netherlands as a refugee in 1992. She graduated in political science and was active within the Labour party until 2002 when she switched to the VVD and became a member of the Dutch Parliament in 2003. Hirsi Ali is famous for her radical standpoints against Islam in general and the Muslim community in the Netherlands in particular. I first saw Ayaan in 2002 as she appeared in a discussion program on Dutch television. At that time, I saw a strong woman who fought for her ideas: someone who dared to distance herself from her traditional, Islamic background and by doing so, position herself against the traditional Muslim community in the Netherlands. Her arguments on the incompatibility between Islamic belief and women's emancipation were sharp. She stood up for the rights of Muslim women, whom she believed were suppressed by Islamic tradition and law. I initially identified with Hirsi Ali, however my identification with her did not last long.

I soon realized that Ayaan had become a welcome mouthpiece for the dominant discourse on Islam in the Netherlands that pictures Muslim migrants as problems and enemies of the nation. Who could better represent the dominant view than a person with an Islamic background? Predictably, Ayaan soon became a prominent figure both for the media and in politics. She sailed on the conservative ideas in the Netherlands that push migrants—the most marginalized group in society—even further into isolation. It was in the Netherlands that I discovered that real enlightenment does not come from exclusion, but rather inclusion. Real enlightenment means thinking and reflecting upon one's own thoughts, and being brave enough to listen to the other. The art of knowing is not in excluding other ideas by suppressing or ignoring them; the art is to confront other ideas through dialogue. When one is able to suspend one's own thoughts for a short while in order to really listen, a space is created even if it is for a short while to challenge those notions that are taken for granted.

Forging a democratic citizenry

Beneath this rightist discourse in the Netherlands lay particular definitions of "nation" and "culture." What the above-mentioned figures in the Netherlands share is their emphasis on the incompatibility of cultures, the need to protect Dutch culture and identity from cultural invasion, and the need to promote Dutch cultural norms and values. This newly formed exclusionary rhetoric is based on a homogeneous, static, coherent, and rooted notion of culture which Stolcke calls "cultural fundamentalism."[2] Explaining the immigrants' problems through culture is not only naive, it is also a specific form of cultural fundamentalism which weakens the very foundations of the nation.

There has emerged a dual discourse of citizenship: one discourse for the "real Dutch," and another one for the "unwanted Dutch" who need to "integrate," "be saved from their husbands," or "learn the language." The latter discourse presumes that migrants are not mature enough to decide matters for themselves, and thereby promotes a passive citizenship. Migrants can only feel part of a society if they know that their voices are taken seriously as active citizens. When migrants' choices, including the choice to maintain aspects of their culture, are respected, migrants can feel included in the society. This is the only fruitful path for any multicultural state.

Notes

1. This piece is an abridged version of an article by Halleh Ghorashi, "Ayaan Hirsi Ali: daring or dogmatic? Debates on multiculturalism and emancipation in the Netherlands," *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology*, no. 42 (2003):163-73.
2. Verena Stolcke, "Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe," *Current Anthropology* 36, no.1 (1995): 1-24.

Halleh Ghorashi is Assistant Professor of Organizational Anthropology at the Department of Culture, Organization, and Management at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. She is the author of *Ways to Survive, Battles to Win: Iranian Women Exiles in the Netherlands and the United States* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003).
E-mail: h.ghorashi@fsw.vu.nl

Transnational Islam in Western Europe

RALPH GRILLO &
BENJAMIN F. SOARES

Islam is undeniably transnational, yet Muslims may experience transnationalism differently depending on their countries of origin and residence and mode of settlement. This article indicates some of the various ways in which Islam and transnationalism intersect and suggests how transnationalism impinges on contemporary debates about how to live as a Muslim in Western Europe and on the emergence of a "European Islam" or "European-Muslim" identity.[1]

Sixteen years ago the publication of Gerholm and Lithman's collection of essays *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*[2] was an important first attempt to try to understand the so-called "presence" of Muslims on the continent. Since then, the literature has expanded exponentially with detailed monographs and overviews now available for many countries and for Europe as a whole. This increasing academic attention reflects the changing nature of the Muslim population and its significance for societies which in varying degrees see themselves as "multicultural." There are now some 10-15 million Muslims in Western Europe, and compared with the 1980s they are more widespread (e.g. in Italy and Spain) and come from a wider range of societies of origin (Africa, the Middle East, South and Central Asia, the Balkans), than even 16 years ago, and as well as migrants they include many refugees. The Muslim presence is not only wider, but deeper. In many places, the early circulatory migration of Muslim men from former colonies to the metropole has given way to the settlement of families and the coming of age of second and third generations, with enormous implications during periods of economic change and uncertainty and in a post-9/11 world.

Though many Muslims are now long-term migrants and refugees and/or have been born and raised in the countries of immigration, the relationship with societies of origin has not diminished, on the contrary, and this is one way transnationalism enters. The significance of transnationalism or what is now understood as the transnational character of Islam and of migrant populations who espouse it, was not fully apparent or appreciated 16 years ago, and remains under-researched despite studies which have placed Islam in the context of globalization. Transnationalism is not, however, a single phenomenon. There are different ways of living transnationally; transnational Islam takes numerous forms.

West African Muslims from Senegal or Mali for example, often practice Islam within the context of transnational labour migration circuits. Although residing in France or Italy, their lives are firmly "anchored" in West Africa. Their presence in Europe is temporary and they associate Islam with "home." Others, Turks in Germany, Pakistanis or Iranians in Britain, North Africans in France, are more firmly rooted in their country of residence, but pursue bi-national or pluri-national agendas. That is, they operate in two or more nation-state systems, engaging, albeit in different ways, with the culture, society, economy, politics, and not least, religion of each. Nonetheless, there may be considerable diversity both within and between such populations in the extent to which they do so. Iranian Sufis in Britain, for example, have relatively little to do with other Muslims or with addressing British institutions, but are heavily concerned with the situation in Iran and with the internationally distributed Iranian exile community. Pakistani Muslims are often fully engaged with British institutions through mosques, British political parties, participation in local government etc.

Another way in which Muslims may operate transnationally is through the idea of the ummah, the global Islamic "imagined" community many Muslims, as well as analysts, frequently invoke. Although the ummah remains abstract and de-territorialized, case studies from many parts of Europe show how watershed events (debates about the hijab on the one hand, wars in Afghanistan or Iraq on the other) lead to a heightened sense of a transnational community. At the same time, national, ethnic, doctrinal or sectarian differences within the Muslim population continue to be important. Against the wishful thinking of Islamists (and the exuberance of students of cultural studies and cosmopolitan intellectuals) transnational has not meant post-national.

The importance of the ummah for Muslims in Europe is that it constitutes a transnational public sphere, a network of relations and institutions encompassing but extending beyond Europe to include scholars and authorities throughout the Muslim world. This transnational Muslim public sphere intersects with other public spheres in Europe, and this has implications for the way in which the important question of what it means to be a Muslim in Europe is being addressed.

European nation states have been defined by both religious (Judeo-Christian) traditions and secular (liberal-democratic) ideals which often make it seem difficult if not impossible to accommodate Islam. Consequently, the question whether and if so how, one might live as a Muslim in Europe is widely debated by both Muslims and non-Muslims. There is no definitive answer. Various routes are being explored, some more quietist, some more secular, some more clamorous, some more negotiatory. Contemporary discussions of "European Islam" illustrate some of these responses. Whether concerned with the construction of "European-Muslim" as a (hyphenated) personal or collective identity, or with "European Islam" as a set of Islamic ideas, institutions, and practices specific to the European context, these discussions are key sites for understanding the intersection of Islam, transnationalism, and the public sphere in Europe.

Notes

1. This article is based on a recent collection edited by Ralph Grillo and Benjamin F. Soares in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies: Special Issue on Islam, Transnationalism and the Public Sphere in Western Europe* 30, no. 5 (2004). Contributors include John Bowen, Heiko Henkel, Kira Kosnick, Bruno Riccio, Ruba Salih, Armando Salvatore, Kathryn Spellman, and Pnina Werbner.
2. *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe, ed.* T. Gerholm and G.Y. Lithman (London: Mansell Publishing, 1988).

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A protest against racism in Hamburg, 24 August 2002

Ralph Grillo is Research Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Sussex.
E-mail: r.d.grillo@sussex.ac.uk

Benjamin F. Soares is a researcher at the African Studies Centre in Leiden.
E-mail: bsoares@FSW.leidenuniv.nl

Theses on Religion & Violence

BRUCE LINCOLN

The following observations constitute a preliminary and provisional response to two recent events: the murder of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands, and the American assault on Fallujah, both of which prompt broader reflections on issues pertaining to violence and religion.

1. If war is the continuation of politics by other means, as von Clausewitz observed, violence is the continuation of conflict by means of physical force. Understanding the causes of violence thus involves two questions: a) What are the causes of conflict (in general and specific)? b) Why is it that a given conflict was not resolved—or not resolvable—by other means?

2. Some violence is the product of psychopathology: paranoia, sadism, wildly displaced rage, and the like. Violence of this sort accounts for a very small portion of the total and holds relatively little theoretical interest. The designation of violence as irrational, however, is attractive to certain theorists and policy-makers since it removes such acts from the realm of the comprehensible and relieves them of the responsibility to have prevented or understood them.

3. Most conflict is caused by competition over scarce resources. Violence represents the attempt to resolve such conflict to one's own (individual or collective) benefit against the determined resistance of an adversary.

4. The resources most often and most bitterly contested include not only material desiderata—above all, wealth, power, and territory—but also such non-material items as prestige (the respect of others), dignity (the capacity for self-respect), and justice (or at least the sense of having been treated justly). This latter set is more diffuse and harder to quantify than the material desiderata, and as a result such considerations tend to be analytically undervalued. Nonetheless, they have enormous importance, especially when the maldistribution of material goods is compounded (also facilitated and legitimated) by non-material maldistributions.

5. Crossing the threshold from non-violent to violent conflict involves a qualitative leap that can be difficult to accomplish, particularly if it is motivated only by material desires. Normally, the naked pursuit of self-interest is perceived and defined as greed, not only by observers, but also by those who experience such temptation. To reveal oneself as motivated by greed calls forth sanctions. These include the loss of non-material assets (reputation, trust, self-respect, et al.) that seriously offsets potential material gains, thereby inhibiting the move to violence.

6. Insofar as a sense of suffering non-material maldistribution also entails a sense of having been wronged, would-be aggressors become able to define their violent acts as not just greedy, but morally justified. The discourses they develop and circulate toward that end may be intended to persuade others, but above all they help overcome their own subjective (i.e. moral) inhibitions.

7. Certain kinds of religious discourse can assist in this task, specifically those which recode otherwise problematic acts as righteous deeds, sacred duties or the like, as when killing is defined as sacrifice, destruction as purification, or war as Crusade.

8. In principle, no religious tradition is more inclined than any other to make arguments of this sort. All people are capable of this move and the canonic texts of all religions include passages that can be put to such purpose. Those who are interested in undertaking violence can always find arguments and precedents that sanctify their purpose, but selective reading and tendentious interpretation are an important part of this process.

9. When social groups constitute their identity in religious terms and experience themselves as a sacred collectivity (the faithful, the righteous, or God's chosen people, for instance), as a corollary they tend to construe their rivals in negative fashion (heretics, infidels, apostates, evil, bestial, demonic, satanic, etc.). Under such circumstances, the pursuit of self-interest—including vengeance for slights to one's pride (a.k.a. "honour") — can be experienced as a holy cause, in support of which any violence is justified.

10. The factors that determine whether a group will embark on violent action include the extent to which it feels itself to have been wronged; the extent to which it experiences those wrongs as unbearable and intractable; and its ability to define itself and its cause as righteous, even sacred.

11. Religious considerations are never the sole determining factor and there is no necessary relation between religion and violence. In most instances, religious considerations probably help to inhibit violence. But when religious discourse, authority, or communal identity are deployed in such a way as to facilitate the leap from non-violent to violent conflict, they can be enormously effective in accomplishing what Kierkegaard called "the religious suspension of the ethical."

12. In such moments, religion can help disadvantaged groups to gain a more equitable division of the world's resources by unleashing violence (or the threat thereof) that helps them overcome the resistance of their better-situated adversaries.

13. The ugliest, most dangerous situations of all are not those in which the disadvantaged turn violent, believing they enjoy divine favour. Worse still are episodes in which groups who already enjoy disproportionate power (and other resources) persuade themselves that religious injunctions, like the need to convert the heathen or the need to spread "freedom," justify use of their superior force against disadvantaged others, construing such aggression as benevolent, meritorious, or holy.

14. Just as the use of violence tends to elicit a violent riposte, so the religious valorization of violence prompts its victims to frame their violent responses in religious terms. In doing so, they normally invert the signs through which their adversaries mark one side as sacred and the other, profane. When both sides experience their struggle in religious terms, the stage is set for prolonged, ferocious, and enormously destructive combat.

PHOYO BY MAURICE MCDONALD / © REUTERS, 2004

A British priest gives a service at the Shaibah Base, Basra, Iraq, 30 October 2004.

Bruce Lincoln is the Caroline E. Haskell Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Chicago and author of *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (University of Chicago Press, 2003). E-mail: Blincoln@uchicago.edu

The Beslan Massacre

VLADIMIR BOBROVNIKOV

Violence has severely affected Russian society with the increase of terrorist attacks since 1995. The school massacre in the Ossetian town of Beslan caused shock and awe in all of Russia and beyond. It culminated a series of terrorist attacks whose foundations were laid in the history of the two Chechen wars in which Russian troops brought havoc to Chechen society. Though terrorism is usually regarded as a violation of basic Islamic principles, today Islam is effectively used in Russia by radical nationalist factions to justify their political strategies.

On 1 September 2004 the festive beginning of a new school year in Russia turned into a national tragedy. A group of about 30 armed men and two women wearing explosive belts seized a secondary school in the small town of Beslan near Vladikavkaz in Northern Ossetia. Teachers, pupils, and their relatives were taken hostages. Their number reached about 1300 and consisted mostly of children. The hostage-takers demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from neighbouring Chechnya. Russian commandos and local militia surrounded the school. In a bloody assault that ensued on 3 September most hostages were freed, but in the fighting the school was destroyed, leaving most terrorists together with 11 Russian soldiers and 344 civilians killed and many others injured. Some of the terrorists escaped.

The impact of the Beslan massacre in Russia is comparable to that of the 9/11 attacks in the United States. Russians felt and expressed solidarity with the Beslan victims. The State Bank opened an account for numerous donations to be transferred to them and a special Internet site on Beslan was created (www.beslan.ru). About 135,000 people took part in an anti-terrorist demonstration held near the Kremlin in Moscow on 7 September. The official Russian media blamed "international Islamic terrorists" for carrying out the Beslan assault and named al-Qaida as responsible for it. At the same time fears from "Caucasians" and Islam in general grew. A Levada-Center poll indicated that 33% of Russians were in favour of preventing Chechens from entering Russian towns. In Moscow, over 10,000 Muslim migrants were detained by the police, among them the Daghestani cosmonaut Magomed Tolboev who was taken for a Chechen.

Causes of violence

It is unlikely that the Beslan tragedy and occurrence of terrorist violence in Russia in general is the result of the "export of Islamic terrorism" from the Middle East as the official media put it. The causes of violence are rooted in two recent Russian-Chechen wars, in particular in the atrocities committed by the Russian army. Many terrorists have been recruited from amongst Chechens who as teenagers had suffered during these wars. It is not without coincidence that some of the terrorists who attacked the school in Beslan had lost relatives and livelihood in the mid-1990s, like the only captured hostage-taker, Nur-Pasha Kulaev (b. in 1980). The supposed heads of the terrorists, Ruslan Khochubarov (b. 1972) and Khodov (b. in 1976), also belong to the war generation.

There are numerous reports of dramatic recollections of the Russian-Chechen wars playing an important role in escalating violence in Russia. As one of the terrorists in Beslan told a hostage girl: "Russian troops in Chechnya caught children just like you and cut their heads off." His own daughter had been killed. In this way atrocities such as the use of children as human shields are being reproduced. The Chechen background of the Beslan massacre is also confirmed by a number of similar attacks that had preceded it. The most important incidents include hostage-taking in Budenovsk (1995), Kizliar (1996) and Moscow (2002), explosions in Moscow and Volgodonsk (1999), Kaspiisk (2002) and Grozny (2004), a recent case of two planes blown up by suicide women-bombers. The terrorist units often include young women referred to as Black Widows who had lost relatives during the wars. Some of these attacks were carried out by one of the main Chechen rebels, Shamil Basaev. On 17 September he claimed responsibility for the Beslan hostage-taking.

The Beslan incident sheds light on the complicated relationship between religion and terrorism. Though terrorism is not supported by Islamic law, nevertheless there are also different visions of Islam, including that of Basaev and his sympathisers which consider terrorist attacks as legitimate tools in the defence of the Muslim community (of Chechnya). The Beslan case demonstrates that, in Russia, radical nationalist groups use religious identification and adopt the Islamic principle of martyrdom to meet their political ends. The Beslan attack was carried out by al-Riyad al-Salihin group which appeals mostly to Caucasian Muslim populations such as Chechens, Ingushes, and Daghestanis. By choosing their victims to be from among the Russian Orthodox Ossetians they effectively positioned themselves as "Muslims" in contrast to the captured "infidel" civilians and Russian troops. A survivor remembered that "…one of the gunmen was reading the Quran constantly." Fragments of the interrogation of detained attacker Kullaev diffused by the Russian First Channel also demonstrate the radical Islamist stance of the group.

The Beslan massacre reveals both the strengths as well as the weaknesses of Islamist radicals. On the one hand, great powers like Russia and the United States are unable to bring to a halt the growth of terrorism and its spreading through their "porous" frontiers. Military counteractions like the one in Beslan are not likely to eradicate terrorism and nobody knows what will be the next target. On the other hand, terrorism will bring the Caucasian Muslims neither national liberation nor a sharia state. It might only result in human casualties and economic degradation along the Caucasian frontiers of Russia.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER DEMIANCHUK, © REUTERS, 2004

A survivor of the Beslan schoolsiege holds her school album, 21 September 2004.

Vladimir Bobrovnikov works at the Moscow Institute for Oriental Studies and teaches anthropology and Arabic in the Russian State University of Humanities and the Moscow State University. He is the author of *Custom, Law and Violence Among the North Caucasus Muslims* (in Russian).
E-mail: vladbobr@hotmail.com or vladimir_bobrovn@mail.ru

Darfur in War
The Politicization of Ethnic Identities?

KARIN WILLEMSE

Since early 2003 Darfur has been the site of mounting violence which has led the UN to describe the conflict as currently "the world's worst humanitarian crisis." The US Congress even labelled the conflict a "genocide." Diverse ethnic groups as well as the government were engaged in violence in the 1980s and 1990s. However, violence has reached a new dimension in the recent war where racism has become the main legitimating discourse of the conflict. The recent history of the conflict suggests, however, that the root causes are socio-economic and political rather than ethnic.[1]

The so-called Opposition Forces in Darfur rebelled against the Sudanese military government of General Omar al-Bashir early in 2003. The Opposition Forces consisted of the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/SLM, formerly the Darfur Liberation Front) led by Abd al-Wahid Mohamed Nur, a former member of the Communist party; and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) led by Khalil Ibrahim, a former member of the National Islamic Front, the main Sudanese Islamist party. Though these factions were not indigenous to Darfur, they justified their cause by accusing the government of neglecting the huge economic problems in Darfur while doing nothing about the increasing insecurity and lawlessness related to the continuous influx of high-tech arms into the region. Immediately after the first violence broke out in February 2003 the local government organized a habitual "tribal conference" in al-Fashir. While local leaders proposed negotiation with the different parties, the government was determined to crush the rebellion through military force. It thereby used local militias, now commonly referred to as Janjawiid.

The Janjawiid are usually characterized as "Arab" nomads who have been provided with arms by the Sudanese government. The strategy of turning Arab nomads into a militia is not novel: it was applied by consecutive regimes in the civil war with southern Sudan. Both the democratic regime (1985-89) under the leadership of Sadiq al-Mahdi, and the current Islamist regime, armed Arab nomads from Kordofan and Darfur and turned them into so-called *murahiliin*. The recent deployment of similar counterinsurgency tactics in Darfur suggests that the conflict represents a "southern Sudan speeded up" rather than a new "Rwanda in slow motion."[2]

Ironically, the recent peace negotiations between the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Norway, and the warring parties on the North-South conflict in Sudan which took place in Naivasha, Kenya, fuelled the insurgency in Darfur. The people of Darfur feared that an international success might allow the Sudanese government more room to isolate Darfur and keep them out of national politics altogether. The anxiety of local sedentary groups to lose all grip on political and economic power in their region seems justified by the impunity enjoyed by the *murahiliin* in South Darfur and their increasing political influence. At the same time, the Sudanese government favours a war in Darfur as it temporarily postpones the problem for the government of how to deal with the large numbers of soldiers who have now become redundant in the South. It also prevents its officers from plotting against one of the most unpopular regimes Sudan has known. Moreover, the presence of oil in Darfur might be an ulterior motive for the government to divide, displace, and disband the population in order to "rule" the oilfields, as was the case in the South.

Apart from fighting techniques and the application of a "scorched-earth" policy, the ethnic rhetoric used to justify the violence also bears similarities with the war in the south. In Darfur the conflict is constructed as one of "Arab Muslim nomads" against "Black African farmers." This religious-racial discourse of Islamic superiority hides the fact that the parties involved are all Muslims who are linked with each other by a history of exchange, intermarriage, and even life-style: until recently Fur farmers who converted their wealth into cattle might take up a nomadic life-style, "becoming" an Arab Baqqara nomad within a generation.[3] Similarly, Arabs have become Fur farmers. Constructing the war as a conflict between fixed ethnic groups fits well into the Islamist government's discourse, but hides a more complex history.

A religious war between "Arabs" and "Africans"?

Although the Sudanese Arab elite from Central Sudan are involved in the war in Darfur as affiliates of the Arab nomads, the meaning of "Arab" carries different connotations of class and culture. The educated Arab elite residing in the Nile Valley have constructed themselves as *awlad Arab* and *awlad al-balad*,children (sons) of Arabs and inheritors of the land. They were instrumental in founding political Arab nationalism and claimed the Sudanese nation-state as theirs. By constructing Sudan both as Islamic and Arab they excluded not only Southerners, but other marginal groups like the Fur, the Beja, and the Nubians, respectively in the west, east, and north of the country. Alternatively, the notion of "Arab" that is used for the nomadic peoples in Darfur is used in the sense of Bedouin and indicates backwardness and marginality.

When the current military regime, backed by the Islamist National Islamic Front, took power in 1989 it proclaimed Darfur the "least Islamized region after the South." This stigma concerned all Darfurians: nomads and sedentary farmers alike. This racist Islamist ideology has in the recent war in Darfur been adjusted, or one could say "refined." Since members of the Fur and the Masalit, both predominantly sedentary farmers, and the Zaghawa, semi-nomads, have become involved in the rebel movement they have been cast collectively as Black Africans: black suggesting the status of a slave and automatically of a non-Muslim. These so called "non-Muslims" have become opposed to Arab Muslims which, in Darfur, now include nomads. However, these recent events date back to a much longer history of ethnic strife and political conflict.

After the Darfur sultanate became part of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium of the Sudan in 1916, it was divided into *"dar(s)*," administrative areas under the control of appointed tribal leaders. This division led to clearly demarcated "homelands" related to fixed ethnic identities referred to in names such as "Dar Zaghawa" and "Dar al-Arab," particularly in North-Darfur. Although the tribal leaders never lost complete power, in 1994 the native administration council was "re-invented" in order to govern the area via local leaders "on the cheap": it directly led to renewed conflicts in the far west of Darfur.[4]

Due to ongoing desertification camel nomads, who had been allotted "dar(s)" in the far north of Darfur, suffered most from the deteriorating environmental conditions. In particular since the droughts of the 1970 and 1980s they would more frequently and earlier in the season come down with their camels that trampled, ate, or otherwise destroyed the not yet harvested crops of the local farmers and threatened to deplete the local water resources.

Moreover, in the 1980s ethnic identities became increasingly politicized. In 1981 Darfur people rallied for a Darfur governor demanding equality with other regions in Sudan under the 1972 Regional Auton-

omy Act. However, the installation of a Fur as governor turned out to be a bone of contention. Intellectuals claiming Arab descent organized themselves in the Arab Congregation which was supported by the government. As intellectuals from other ethnic groups were drawn into the conflict as well, ethnic differences were fed into national politics and became even more fixed. As a consequence, raids by Arab *fursan* (knights) and Fur *malishat* (militia) were quite un-problematically cast as an ethnic conflict waged between the "Arab belt" versus the "African belt." The Fur felt that the Arabs aimed at destroying their ancestral rights to the land, while Arabs claimed that Fur threatened to oust them under the slogan "Darfur for the Fur."[5] The influx of high-tech weapons in the same period due to the war between Libya and Chad, the donations of arms by diverse political parties after the democratic elections, and the arming of militia by consecutive governments has fuelled this conflict.

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Sudanese refugees from Darfur wait for aid distribution at Brejin camp in eastern Chad.

Youth, guns, and the quest for power

In the media the term Janjawiid, referring to the Arab nomadic militia, has been dissected into "evil" (jaan) "horsemen" (jawid), or even devils riding horses carrying GM 3 rifles. However, prior to the recent conflict, the term was used more generally to refer to "rabble" or "outlaws", in particular in cases of banditry and camel theft committed predominantly by young men.[6] It is this reference to young men that is crucial to any understanding of the situation.

In the early 1990s, when I conducted anthropological research in Kebkabiya, a town that has been recently under heavy siege, conflicts over scarce resources concerned predominantly Fur and Zaghawa, groups that have now become allies in the conflict. The failure of traditional negotiation and peace keeping mechanisms, such as tribal reconciliation conferences—the last one between Fur and Arabs took place only in 1989, to no avail—proved to be not only due to the politicization of ethnic identities. Of importance as well was the discontent within the ethnic groups. The authority of tribal leaders, and elderly men in general, was increasingly contested by young males. The general neglect of Darfur in national development plans left youngsters with few possibilities of becoming a "man" in socio-cultural terms. They had difficulties paying for the bride-price and wedding-arrangements that mark maturity and social status. Even when they did marry, young nomads were hardly able to provide for their families as nomads. For their part, many young sedentary farmers had to migrate to towns for some extended period of time in order to earn the money necessary to raise a family. Moreover, despite the high expectations placed on education, educated young men barely had the means and ability to provide for their families.

In farming communities in Darfur, women are the main cultivators while single young men are often redundant. Formerly they would wander from one Quranic school to the next, or engage in odd jobs for survival. Single nomadic young men were most important for herding camels. In times of drought only young men would tend to the smaller herds temporarily leaving behind women, children, and the elderly in small settlements near sedentary peoples. This process of settling by female nomads coupled with male out-migration among sedentary farmers has created communities that consist of predominantly female-headed households, of both sedentary and nomadic backgrounds. These populations engage with increasing frequency and scale in interethnic exchange, share-cropping, and intermarriage. As the temporary nomadic settlements have become more permanent and, moreover, host a larger number of young male nomads, the nomadic lifestyle becomes increasingly extinct. This change creates insecurity and anxiety among the settled nomadic communities. Moreover, in order to survive the new settlers need access to land, water, labour, and knowledge, thus competing more directly over exactly the same resources that sedentary farmers use in these transition zones. These happen also to be the areas where most of the outbursts of violence have taken place.

In these deteriorating conditions of deprivation and despair among nomadic and sedentary young men "without a future," weapons form an easy and immediate satisfaction in the quest for respect, self-identity, and a sense of control. The label genocide seems therefore to miss the point: apart form its legal complexity, the conflict has its base in socio-economic and political factors with a far more complicated history. Moreover, it is not clear whether the Janjawiid are ethnically homogeneous, or include young men from diverse ethnic backgrounds. And, even though youths who make up the Janjawiid have been armed by the government, this is not to say that the government is able to control and direct this monster it helped create. In Africa, where a majority of the population is under 30 years of age, conflicts which engage predominantly youngsters is unfortunately more common than the "uniqueness" of the conflict in Darfur might suggest.

Due to the high presence of young disenfranchised men, the conflict has taken on an especially troubling gender dimension. Women are systematically verbally abused, raped, assaulted, mutilated, their relatives killed in front of their eyes, while young men of "battle age" are main targets of mass killings. This gender biased targeting, or "gendercide," is part of many recent so-called ethnic conflicts.[7] In Darfur, where ethnic affiliation is traced patrilineally, intermarriage results in women begetting children of different background than their own. This also means that women, as the keepers in many cases of multiethnic families, react to ethnic wars in a different way than men who tend to identify more with a fixed, unified, ethnic identity. Women and children of diverse ethnicities have in fact been caught similarly in the crossfire between rebels, government, and bandits. At the same time women have proven to be resilient and perseverant when it comes to constructing a future for their children. Though peace-negotiations will be a long and difficult process and do not seem to be possible in the near future, not only the obvious tribal leaders and government officials should be party to negotiations: young men and women should be included as well. In Darfur the saying "Your mother's family is from the heart, your father's family comes from far" might be of help in trying to find an alternative, common denominator for reconciliation-talks.

Karin Willemse is Assistant Professor at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, Department of History, and author of *"One foot in heaven" Narratives on Gender and Islam in Darfur, West-Sudan* (forthcoming with Brill Publishers).
E-mail: k.willemse@fhk.eur.nl

Notes

1. I am grateful to Shamil Jeppie for his valuable input in this article.
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Jihadi Opposition in Saudi Arabia

ROEL MEIJER

Since May 2003 Saudi Arabia has been the scene of an armed confrontation between al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula (QAP) and the State. The Saudi authorities issued three lists of suspects who were either wanted or already killed. These lists provide some insight into the background of QAP members and the nature of the organization.[1]

Who are the 48 men on the two lists published by the Saudi authorities of most wanted terrorists (the "List of 19" and the "List of 26") and the list of the twelve who had died in the first suicide attack in Riyad on 12 May by the al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula (QAP)? The place of origin and tribal background of the QAP members listed in these lists is highly diverse, but it is noticeable that at least thirteen lived in Riyadh, with nine of them in the Suwaydi quarter which appears to be the hotbed of the movement.

The social background of the members is more difficult to ascertain because not all lists contain the necessary information. Some have an upper-middle class background (their fathers being dentists, high-ranking civil servants, and police officers), and a few have a lower middle class background. Remarkably, quite a number were married, including those who lost their lives in the suicide bombings in Riyad. One of the most striking features of the group is their youth with 27 being their average age. The four leaders who belong to the "second generation" of al-Qa'ida were in their early thirties, while most of their followers were younger, some of them as young as 22. Moreover, the average age of the members of one of the QAP cells, the "Khalidyya cell," located in Mecca, was only nineteen.

Educational Background

QAP also shows an interesting picture both in terms of the level and kind of education of its members. Whereas the non-violent Islamist movement is typically a student movement, only eighteen of the listed members had a higher education and only ten of these had acquired a degree. Quite a few did not even have a secondary school certificate. None of the four leaders of the movement finished secondary school.

The type of education of the QAP members is also remarkable. While supporters of Islamist movements very often have a background in the technical and natural sciences or in medicine, this was the case for only two of the listed QAP members, while at least twelve had enjoyed a religious higher education. Most of them studied at the Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud Islamic University in Riyadh. This rooting in religious studies also explains why the formulation and spreading of ideology plays such an important role in this group. While most members were coined "foot soldiers" (*muqatilin maydaniyyin*), nine were called "sharia theoreticians" (*munazzarin shari'iyyin*). It was this small group of "intellectuals" that wrote the articles for QAP's bi-monthly internet-magazine, *Sawt al-Jihad* and, thereby, spread the group's ideas of jihad amongst a large audience.

Afghanistan

The one common characteristic of the QAP members was their connection with Afghanistan. Nearly half of the persons listed had been in training camps in Afghanistan and at a very young age. The first three leaders had gone there when still in their teens, and the third leader, 'Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin, "Abu Hajir," when he was 17 years old. Later he became a trainer himself and left Afghanistan to fight in Algeria, Bosnia, and Somalia. The first leader, Yusuf al-Ayiri, was trained in Afghanistan during the early 1990s, while the second leader, Khalid Hajj, "Abu Hazim al-Sha'ir," had probably been there at a later date. At least ten from the younger generation either fought side by side with the Taliban or with Osama bin Laden in the caves of Tora Bora against the Americans when they were still in their teens or early twenties. It may very well be that these probably traumatic experiences, together with the Saudi endorsement of the American demolition of the Taliban, led them to add to their struggle against the "external enemy," the United States, a struggle against the "internal enemy," Saudi Arabia.

Finally, there has been considerable debate on the organization of al-Qaida. Some commentators regard it as a loose network with no central command structure. This evaluation may apply more to al-Qaida on the international than on the local level. For, although it is not clear how the Saudi "cells" are linked, the information available from the three official lists points to a hierarchical organization. It seems clear that the QAP had a leadership, a propaganda and a sharia committee, as well as subordinate military cells. This structure suffered, however, severe blows during the first clampdown. The ensuing disarray within the movement could account for the diversity in tactics, ranging from suicide bombings of foreign resident compounds to bombings of state buildings, to the random killing of foreigners in the street. To what extent the network is still able to mobilize its sympathizers is a moot point, but it seems unlikely that the attacks in Jedda in December 2004 concludes the series clashes with the Saudi state.

A hooded man on an Islamist website purporting to be "Abu Hajir", 16 June 2004.

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Note

1. The information herein was collected from Arabic newspapers and corroborated with the information gathered from *Sawt al-Jihad*, the web-publication of QAP.

Roel Meijer is Lecturer at the Radboud University Nijmegen and Postdoctoral Fellow at the ISIM.
E-mail address: roel-meijer@planet.nl

Post-Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia?

STÉPHANE LACROIX

The critique of Wahhabism has gained unprecedented momentum in Saudi Arabia in recent years. First formulated by a small group of prominent liberal and Islamist intellectuals, it seems to have received the approval of at least part of the ruling elite who have taken a few official steps towards socio-religious reform. But is Saudi Arabia ready to enter the era of Post-Wahhabism?

Substantial changes have taken place in the last few years in Saudi Arabia, especially within the local political-intellectual field. Significant among these is the rise to prominence of a group of "Islamo-liberals," who are "made up of former Islamists and liberals, Sunnis and Shiites, calling for a democratic change within an Islamic framework through a revision of the official Wahhabi religious doctrine."[1] Although not all have given as much importance to religious criticism as they have to political criticism, the critique of Wahhabism—in its political, social, and religious aspects[2]—has undoubtedly been one of the mainsprings of this new trend. That is not to say that this phenomenon is completely without precedence in Saudi Arabia: certain doctrinal aspects of Wahhabism had, at times, come under attack by prominent ulama from al-Hijaz and al-Hasa provinces and—though less commonly—from "dissident" ulama from the Najd region, the birthplace of Wahhabism. However, the word "Wahhabism" itself was not long ago nearly completely taboo. The few critiques that surfaced came mostly from Saudis belonging to peripheral geographical or religio-political groups, and these moves were always isolated. What we have today is quite different: the critique of Wahhabism—which is now often bluntly called by this name—has gained ground. It touches upon all aspects of the Wahhabi tradition, and even comes from within Wahhabism's own ideological and geographical core.

Critical trends

Among the non-Shiite[3] critical trends, the first includes Saudi liberals, such as writer and political analyst Turki al-Hamad, who for decades had denounced social manifestations of Wahhabism, such as the religious police or the ban on women's driving. This group has, in the post-9/11 climate, considerably sharpened its criticism and clearly indicated their enemy by name. Secondly, a group of young and daring intellectuals—Mansur al-Nuqaidan and Mishari al-Zayidi being the two best known—have taken advantage of the Islamic credentials inherited from their Islamist past in order to develop an Islamic critique of Wahhabism. Through a series of articles they have denounced "the excesses of the Wahhabi doctrine," notably drawing an explicit link between it and the *jihadi* violence experienced by the country since May 2003. Thirdly, some Islamic thinkers have, since the mid-1990s, formulated a *salafi* critique of Wahhabism. Hasan al-Maliki, the most prominent among these, castigates the doctrinal rigidity of Wahhabism and its tendency to slavishly imitate Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Ibn Taymiyya, rather than to create thoughts on the basis of what are, in his view, genuine Salafism tenets. Abdallah al-Hamid shares al-Maliki's belief that Wahhabism has only become a caricature of true Salafism and calls for a return to the latter. This is a condition which becomes for him the theoretical basis of his pro-democracy activism. Lastly, a fourth kind of critique has appeared which could be called a Wahhabi critique of Wahhabism. One of its champions is Islamist lawyer and political activist Abd al-Aziz al-Qasim, who insists on the internal plurality of the original Wahhabi tradition as it has developed over the past 250 years, and believes that he can revive some of its most tolerant aspects.

The critique ... even comes from within Wahhabism's own ideological and geographical core.

Governmental backing

What is even more unprecedented is that the Saudi government has partly subscribed to these critical trends and has taken a number of preliminary steps towards—though not yet political—but at least social and religious reform. The organization in June 2003 of the first national dialogue conference in which thirty ulama belonging to all the confessional groups present in the kingdom's territory—Wahhabi and non-Wahhabi Sunnis, Sufis, Ismaili, and Twelver Shiites—participated was a clear move in that direction. This conference led to the adoption of a charter containing a set of "recommendations." Some of these can be considered as a severe blow to the Wahhabi doctrine: first, the charter acknowledges the intellectual and confessional diversity of the Saudi nation, which is contrary to traditional Wahhabi exclusivism; second, it criticizes one of Wahhabism's juridical pillars, the principle of *sadd al-dhara'i'* (the blocking of the means), which requires that actions that could lead to committing sins must themselves be prohibited. It is notably in pursuing this principle that women are denied the right to drive in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, none of the figures of the official Wahhabi establishment were invited to attend the conference, which obviously denotes a willingness to marginalize them. In addition, the fact that the government-controlled press has recently opened its columns to the Islamo-liberals' religious criticism clearly reflects a degree of official support for it. It is also worth noting that there have been some improvements on two crucial socio-religious issues: the status of women, whose economic role has officially been acknowledged and who have been given a voice in the national dialogue, and that of the Shiites, who have recently witnessed a relative loosening of the restrictions imposed on their religious practice.

It therefore seems that part of the ruling elite now acknowledges the necessity for a revision of Wahhabism. The reasons for this go far beyond the American pressures on the kingdom. It has indeed become clear that only such a move would permit the creation of a true Saudi nation, based on the modern and inclusive value of citizenship—a reality still missing and much needed in times of crisis. However, the sticking point is that this ideological shift must go hand in hand with a radical reformulation of old political alliances both at home and abroad. And therein lies the problem.

Stéphane Lacroix is a Ph.D. candidate and teaching assistant at Sciences-Po Paris.
E-mail: djahez@yahoo.com

Notes

1. Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New Islamo-liberal Reformist Trend," *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 345-65.
2. "Wahhabism" initially refers to the religious tradition developed over the centuries by the ulama of the official Saudi religious establishment founded by the heirs of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. It is however commonly used in Saudi Arabia in a broader meaning, encompassing its social and political implications.
3. Shiite critique on Wahhabism has a long history given the antagonism between the two. Currently the Saudi Shiite reformist intellectuals, as part of their strategy of conciliation with the regime, are careful not to publicly make direct attacks on Wahhabism.

Conversion & Conflict
Muslims in Mexico

NATASCHA GARVIN

Conversion to Islam has been taking place in the conflict-ridden Mexican state of Chiapas for about ten years. Islam was introduced to the local indigenous population by members of the transnational Murabitun movement who founded a commune in the town of San Cristóbal de las Casas, governed by its own rules and protected strictly against outsiders.

Religious pluralism in Latin America has grown steadily since the second half of the twentieth century. Embedded in a broad spectrum of syncretistic Catholicism which incorporated various Amerindian beliefs and practices, communities first began to join the movement for liberation theology. The second and more diverse trend has been to move away from Catholicism altogether and join a variety of Protestant denominations. In Mexico, and especially in Chiapas, a new facet of religious pluralism is emerging: the spread of Islam.[1]

Muslims in Mexico

Although the Muslim community in Mexico is quite small (about 1,000 members which means about 0,001% of the 97,5 million inhabitants of the country), the panorama is already showing considerable diversity: There are roughly equal numbers of Muslims of foreign origin (mainly Lebanese and Syrian) and Mexican converts. Centro Cultural Islámico de México (CCIM), a Sunni organization headed by Omar Weston, a British convert to Islam, is active in several big cities of northern and central Mexico. It has established a da'wa (call for conversion) centre near Mexico City with the aim of offering a place for recreation, prayer and learning. Shi'a Muslims, for their part, number only a few dozen and most of them are diplomats from Lebanon, Syria and Iran. Apart from the CCIM there is a Sufi order called Nur Ashki Jerrahi in Mexico City which is headed by two women, Shaykha Fariha and Shaykha Amina, whose beliefs and practices are considered by many to be a fairly unorthodox mixture of Islamic and New Age-like mysticism and feminism. A second and larger community of Sufis founded by Mohammed Nafia, a Spanish convert from Granada, exists in San Cristóbal de las Casas (Chiapas). This community is attached to the transnational Murabitun Movement which consists almost exclusively of recent converts, mostly from European backgrounds.

Cathedral of San Cristóbal

PHOTO BY NATASCHA GARVIN, 2004

The Murabitun movement

The Murabitun Movement was founded in the 1970s by Shaykh Abd al-Qadir as-Sufi al-Murabit, a Scotsman also known by his former name Ian Dallas. It has since spread from its base at the "Norwich Academy" in Britain, to other parts of Europe, Africa, the United States, Southeast and Central Asia, and Australia. In Germany for example there are two groups in Freiburg and Potsdam, known as Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland and linked to the Weimar Institut, which publishes the newspaper *Islamische Zeitung*.[2] The principal aim of the Weimar Institut is to promote studies about the relations between Western cultural heritage and Islam—this also explains why Goethe is an important point of reference.

The Murabitun belong to the Darqawi order founded in Morocco at the end of the eighteenth century. Their name alludes to the Almoravid dynasty which ruled the Maghrib and Spain in the eleventh century. In general, the Murabitun have a rather negative public image and have been accused of both fundamentalism and Nazism. It has been alleged that they want to re-establish the caliphate in Europe and recover al-Andalus, that their "aggressive" missionary activities deliberately concentrate on regions with intense social conflict (e.g. Chiapas, Chechnya, and eastern Germany), that their shaykh has personal ties with neo-Nazi groups, and that their ideology and discourse contain strong fascist and anti-Semitic ideas.[3] Their financial sources have been reported as being obscure and connected in some way to Malayasia and Dubai.

On their own websites the Murabitun themselves promote adherence to a lifestyle based on the rules by which the Prophet governed Medina as transmitted by Imam Malik, and, most important, autonomy from and boycott of the capitalist banking system and its usurious practices which are held responsible for the fall of the last caliphate. This means that in the long run all trade should function on the basis of dinars and dirhams and correct zakat should be restored. Till then, they offer a system of e-dinars on the internet (www.e-dinar.com), and within their communities try to avoid paper money which is considered haram (forbidden). Murabitun discourse, especially that of the shaykh himself, is often marked by a rather aggressive critique of Western hegemony, positivist science, and capitalism, and contains overtly anti-Semitic expressions.

The new Muslims of Chiapas

The Spanish Murabitun community, the Comunidad Islámica en España (www.cislamica.org)—based in Granada, Spain, where it helped finance the

Albaicín mosque inaugurated in July 2003—has the strongest ties to the Mexican community. The Spanish missionary Mohammed Nafia, now emir of the Comunidad Islámica en México, arrived in the Mexican state of Chiapas shortly after the Zapatista uprising. After some unsuccessful attempts at converting members of the Zapatista movement, he managed to convince Domingo López Angel, the leader of a Protestant organization whose members or their parents had been expelled from their homes in nearby San Juan Chamula by Catholic traditionalists, to convert to Islam and join the Murabitun movement. Members of this community now live in the poorest areas of San Cristóbal.[4]

> It has been alleged that [the Murabitun]… deliberately concentrate on regions with intense social conflict.

Religious conflicts such as those that led to the expulsion of the Protestants of San Juan Chamula are unfortunately quite common in Chiapas—the least Catholic state of Mexico (only about 64% of the whole population) and the most religiously plural one. This pluralism is reflected in the life stories of many Chiapanecs who have already experienced various conversions, in most cases first from Catholicism to Protestantism and then to different denominations within Protestantism. The Council of Indigenous Representatives of the Highland of Chiapas(CRIACH) was founded due to the vulnerability of the expelled Protestants in order to defend their rights, but it also plays a significant role in local politics.

Although CRIACH now also includes people of mixed descent, the expelled Protestants are predominantly Tzotzils and Tzeltals. So too are those who have converted to Islam in San Cristóbal. The reasons for conversion to Islam are numerous: some converts reported the tax demanded by the Protestant churches as their motivation for conversion. Others, in particular women, have noted the experience of communal living (see below), especially the exclusive space for women, the feeling of protection provided by the headscarves, a more harmonious family life, mainly due to the prohibition of alcohol, a better economic situation, and a change in status relations among the Murabitun in which age is more important than ethnic group or gender. Family ties also play an important role as a motivation for conversion in the case of indigenous converts—frequently the conversion of the head of the family leads to the conversion of its other members, although some conversions have also led to the disruption of the family.

Today the Murabitun of San Cristóbal form a community of about 200 indigenous and non-indigenous Mexicans as well as other Latin American and European (mostly Spanish) converts living together in a commune which includes a a Quranic school, a kindergarten, and workshops for carpentry and tailoring (www.islammexico.org.mx). They also own two pizzerias, one in the centre of town and the other in nearby Comitán, where the menu is tailored to the tastes of the (numerous) tourist clientele, with the aim of obtaining economic autonomy. The indigenous converts to Islam are expected to acquire Western food habits, adopt Muslim names, and, in the case of women, to wear headscarves. Polygamy is allowed and practiced by a few men, but only on condition that they can give all their wives equal economic and emotional care. Linguistically, the Mexican converts are gradually switching from Mexican to Peninsular Spanish.[5]

Community conflicts

The Murabitun community split in 1999 over the issue of disrespect for indigenous culture, authoritarianism of the leadership, the practice of polygamy, and pressures on families to give up their land and take their children out of school. The small number of families who abandoned the Murabitun, but maintained their allegiance to Sunni Islam, received some financial support from the aforementioned CCIM. Conflicts have also arisen with Mexican state authorities and the Spanish embassy, especially since 11 September 2001 and 11 March 2004 (date of the terrorist attack on the Madrid train), the main problems being the residence permits for the Spaniards and suspicions concerning money laundering and connections to the Zapatista liberation movement in Chiapas and the Basque separatist organization ETA. The local and national media also criticize the Murabitun, accusing them, for example, of exploiting the converts as unpaid workers in their businesses. The emir Mohammed Nafia is said to have been imprisoned in Spain and the US for his alleged Islamist activities and to have offered money and weapons to the Zapatistas in exchange for their conversion. At the same time the media provide the Murabitun with the opportunity to disseminate their views about, for example, the US war in Iraq.

The community in San Cristóbal has been portrayed as suspicious, especially towards journalists, and of proselytizing quite aggressively, urging interested outsiders to say the shahada soon after their first contact with the community. After converting, the new members are said to be pressurized to really give up every aspect of their pre-Murabitun life, including contacts to non-Muslim family members, public school attendance of the children, and their Mayan culture in case of the indigenous community members.

The radical attitude of the community as well as its closed nature are in sharp contrast to other Sufi orders, e.g. the aforementioned Nur Ashki Jerrahi, but fit well into the image of the Murabitun movement. On the one hand it seems to be attractive especially for Europeans precisely because of its Sufi teachings that focus on the spiritual awakening of the individual and the feelings of security, harmony, and peace which communal living seems to promise. On the other hand, the political nature of Murabitun ideology, observed mainly on their websites and in the discourse of the shaykh and other prominent figures, also seems to have consequences for local communities, precisely because their leaders implement this ideology through strict rules and try to protect their communities against outsiders. Of course this also has to do with the current hostility towards Islam in the West (and Mexico is no exception), but in the case of Chiapas the situation is further complicated by the political and religious conflicts in the region. Explanations for the success of Islam in San Cristóbal and especially among indigenous people by social scientists working in the area mainly concern the favourable environment of San Cristóbal because of its high level of religious diversity—besides Catholics and Protestants there are also Buddhists, Hindus, and different New-Age-groups due to the influx of tourists and dropouts—and the high receptivity of local people to all forms of religion and communal living. Their "conversion careers" are seen by some as a kind of natural evolution from their "polytheist" variant of Catholicism with its multitude of saints via Trinitarian Protestantism to monotheist Islam. But they might also point to a pragmatic attitude towards religious affiliation, leading to further questions about the advantages of conversion to Murabitun Islam especially for this section of Mexican society.

Natascha Garvin is a Ph.D. candidate and lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at Cologne University.
E-mail: natascha.garvin@uni-koeln.de

Notes

1. This article is mainly based on internet research and on field work carried out in Mexico in July and August 2004. I would like to thank Dr Aparna Rao for her critical comments on an earlier version of this article.
2. Ursula Spuler-Stegemann, *Muslime in Deutschland: Informationen und Klärungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 2002): 139-140. I would like to thank Prof. Jamal Malik for drawing my attention to this source.
3. See murabitun.cyberummah.org, the website of a former Murabitun member who seeks to reveal the ties of the movement both with Freemasonry and neo-Nazis.
4. Marco Lara Klahr, "¿El Islam en Chiapas?: el EZLN y el Movimiento Mundial Murabitun," *Revista Académica para el Estudio de las Religiones* 4(2002): 79-91.
5. Juana María Ruiz Ortiz, "Entrevistas a mujeres indígenas sobre el islam," *Anuario de Estudios Indígenas* 9(2003): 151-188; Angélica Schenerock, "Más allá de velos y peinados: Las reelaboraciones étnicas y genéricas de las chamulas musulmanas sufis en San Cristóbal de Las Casas," paper read at the Tenth Latin American Congress about Religion and Ethnicity in San Cristóbal, July 2004.

The Veil and Fashion Catwalks in Paris

ALEC H. BALASESCU

This article explores the work of Majida Khattari, a Parisian/Moroccan artist whose fashion catwalks /performances challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about the veil. In the context of increased interest in Modern Islam, she proposes an aesthetic approach towards the intersection between Muslim and European forms of expression.

Every fashion season, fashion catwalks in Paris reunite American and Middle Eastern clients. In January 2003, only a few months before the outbreak of war in Iraq, a surprise awaited them at the exit from the catwalks. An alternative catwalk was set up with four models wearing four Afghanian-inspired burkas: the Power-burka integrating in its design the American flag, the Faces of Dictators displaying portraits of political figures of the moment from president Bush and Tony Blair to Saddam Hussein and the King of Jordan, the Trailed-dress in camouflage colours, and the Petition-dress inviting signatures for peace on its white surface. When asked about her choice, Majida said: "everybody knows that at the Chanel catwalk for example, many Middle Eastern and American socialites are present. So, if they can be together and get along on that occasion, why can't they do it when it implies the lives of their own people?"

In France, however, the law promulgated in February 2004 reduces the meaning of the veil to a unique interpretation: the veil is the ostensible sign of a religion (Islam). In October 2004 the communist mayor of Montreuil gave a municipal edict forbidding an announced fashion show reserved just for Muslim women. The reasons claimed were the following: the integration of the veil in a fashion discourse "presents the danger of banalizing" this object, and the proposed event is gender segregated, that is, against the principle of Republican inclusion. The first reason denotes the anxiety of some parts of the French public in facing the possibility of exploring meanings of the veil other than those assigned by the new law. The same anxieties were transparent in July 2004 when Majida Khattari organized her latest exhibition "VIP (Voile Islamique Parisien)" at the School of Beaux Arts in Paris. The artist attempted to "open an alternate venu in a conversation that has been artificially polarized towards the extremes. Both positions, that of Islamic fundamentalists and that of Republican integrationists, are damaging. There are no nuances allowed in this discussion." Using the same artistic modes of expression, Majida Khattari organized a catwalk for *both* men and women wearing veils: a statement that subverted religion, gender, and fashion meanings. Thus, there were black chadors bearing the inscription "Tchador j'adore"—in reference to Dior's publicity campaign—but also veils in silk printed with the VIP logo imitating LV (Louis Vuitton) logo and replacing the small characteristic signs with the crescent moon and the hand of Fatma. The enthusiasm of the host institution decreased in the month preceding the show (scheduled during the fashion week) to such an extent that they refrained from sending out the invitations.

© MAJIDA KHATTARI, 2004

J'adore Tchador, a garment by Majida Khattari, was presented at the VIP catwalk in Paris, July 2004.

The gaze

It seems that the relation between the colonial powers and the colonized Muslim territories are almost always intermediated by the veil. In France's case, the veil was successively the obsessive object whose removal would mark the success of the "civilizing process," the fetish of the colonial enterprise, and, later on, the apple of discord in metropolitan France. On the streets of Paris, a woman wearing a headscarf attracts attention; the veiled woman leads one immediately to think about Islam. Majida Khattari's artistic work makes visible this complex texture of significations intricately woven between fashion and the veil. Fashion catwalks are forms of expression that exemplify the ideal-type of the modern subject formation: the individual is presented as monad, displaying the marks of her/his possessive identity (gender, class, ethnic, or age-based, even if sometimes subverted). Fashion practices appear as the herald of the perfect modernity in which the individual is the product of her/his own (un-)informed choices displayed upon the body, while the body is the vehicle of this representation in the public sphere. The veil is a troubling discord in this logic since it indicates a presumed space of lack of choice (that is, an alternative mode of subject formation).

There is more into the sidewalks of Paris than circulation of people. In fact, Paris as we know it emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, the period of the consolidation of the secular state. The reconstruction of nineteenth century Paris was made possible by, and closely followed, the rules of visibility where the streets became the place of display of the newly established social order. The streets were enlarged and rebuilt in such a way that allowed the eye access to every corner. They also allowed the better display and circulation of commodities, as well as that of the forces of order. The street space was invested with political symbolism. In this manner secularism became engrained in and by a specific spatial (architectural) configuration that privileges flow, visibility, and transparency. Thus, the veil dispute in France is less about Islam, and more about the disruption of the seeming free flow of the gaze which thereby implicitly questions the underlying visual principle of citizenship formation.

It is interesting to observe that not only Muslim women wear the veil. Islam in France, unlike fashion, is not a legitimate instance of women's control. The veil is perceived as re-instituting a private realm in the public, and a religious dimension in the secular space.

Alec H. Balasescu is Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of International Communication, the American University of Paris. This article is based on a study financed by the Wenner Grenn Foundation for Anthropological Research. E-mail: Alec.balasescu@gmail.com

Conflicts Among Hawaii's Muslims

MONA DARWICH-GATTO

One often reads about the larger Muslim communities in California, Michigan, and New York, but rarely has the opportunity to know about the Muslim community in Hawaii. Despite Hawaii's rich cultural mix and accommodation of Asian and Pacific ethnicities, Hawaiin Muslims do not appear to have successfully built a harmonious community within the larger Hawaiian society.

The islands of Hawaii are known for gathering people from all corners of the world who have developed an encompassing culture enabling them all to live in relative harmony. Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian, Filipino, Indonesian, Malaysian, European American, Brazilian, African American, Samoans, and many other cultures intermingle in Hawaii through the media of language (English pidgin), food, and familiarity with each other's history. Different cultures accept a give-and-borrow attitude among each other without necessarily feeling a loss to the essence of their own identity; this is what makes Hawaii's culture appealing and workable for its residents. Muslims constitute part of that cultural mix: the Muslim Association of Hawaii estimates that about 3,000 Muslims live in the state of Hawaii.

Visitors to the islands should not be surprised to find female Muslims wearing hijab while playfully snorkeling at Hanauma Bay, alongside their male Muslim friends who might be surfing on Waikiki beach, or watching an Army Muslim Chaplain running in the morning exercise at Schofield Barracks Army base with his platoon carrying a crescent flag representing Islam. The reason is that Hawaii's Muslim community is truly ethnically diverse, evidence of which can be found at the state's single mosque attached to the Manoa Islamic Center in a suburb close to the University of Hawaii's main campus. Turks, Indonesians, Yemenis, Pakistanis, Palestinians, Indians, Egyptians, African Americans, European Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Tunisians, Moroccans, and Malaysians, among others, meet there for Friday prayers. Potluck meals provide a social occasion for additional, gender-segregated gatherings. While the women pray in a separate room from men they can still view the prayer leader (imam) through a closed circuit television. For some, this conservative atmosphere is welcome, while for others it reinforces undesirable cultural customs originating from some of the home countries rather than strictly Islamic requirements.

Conflicts in community building

Hawaii's Muslim community offers the perfect human lab to test the belief that the Muslim community (ummah) must be united regardless of individual ethnic background. Yet, based on the case of the single mosque in Hawaii, Muslims appear to have been unable to build a local umma within the larger Hawaiian social community. Many members of Hawaii's Muslim community identify multiple conflicting cultures in the Islamic Center as one of the reasons they do not communicate effectively. Language serves as the principle initial barrier, as many Hawaiian Muslims choose to speak their native language, rather than the common language of English. Secondly, some fear that by interchanging cultural traditions and customs they risk jeopardizing their closely held ethnic identity. While mosque members meet for social events such as potlucks, the unspoken norm is to stick to one's own ethnic group; and there is generally a sense of individual members competing to maintain their own ethnic roots by refusing, or lacking the will, to learn the customs and traditions of others.

Members of the different ethnic groups also tend to hold strongly to their own "local" beliefs that may contradict another group's beliefs. For example, Arab Muslims and Indian Muslims engage in eternal disagreements about whether or not the hijab is a divine requirement or a personal choice, and whether men and women must be segregated in social events. This multicultural environment could have promoted healthy discussions, education, and learning among the different Muslim ethnic groups leading to bridges of understanding; but it does not seem to happen. Instead, members get branded as either right or wrong, or conservative or liberal. Where is the midway? Why are Hawaii's Muslims not able to surpass communicative difficulties for the sake of the umma, which supposedly everybody has such a genuine desire to build? Perhaps they have conflicting definitions in the first place of what an umma is, or ought to be.

For many of Hawaii's Muslims, developing a sense of belonging to their community is important. Because of Hawaii's geographic location, cost of living, and lifestyle, many of these Muslims do not settle in Hawaii permanently. Hawaii also has a relatively large number of Muslims serving in the US military, whose members must periodically relocate to other duty stations. Muslim civilians who know that they are eventually moving back to the US mainland are not eager to invest considerable amounts of time and money into the community or its physical infrastructure. All of these factors contribute to a sense of fractured and apathetic community. One of the results of such apathy is the absence of a full time Islamic school,or an ongoing youth program. Indeed, while some families are opting for assimilation, others prefer to move back to the continental United States, or respective homelands, for more spiritual and communal support.

PHOTO BY MONA DARWICH-GATTO, 2004

A family stationed in Oahu, Hawaii

Muslim residents in Hawaii can learn from Hawaii's historical lessons of acceptance. What makes the islands of Hawaii such a hospitable gathering place to many different cultures is the principle of cultural exchange that allows knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of difference. The Japanese, indigenous Hawaiians, Portuguese, Chinese, Filipinos, and many others achieved this communal spirit by creating, for example, an English pidgin language so as to communicate better with one another. Building cultural bridges over ethnic and linguistic divides promotes compassion towards each other. Accordingly, particular Muslim ethnic groups should not aim to impose their cultural beliefs on the others: intolerance within mosque communities creates in turn intolerant Muslims within the umma. Muslims in Hawaii would be better off understanding and respecting each other first before demanding to be understood and respected by non-Muslims. The same condition applies to Muslims worldwide.

Mona Darwich-Gatto is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
Email: M_darwich@yahoo.com

Academic Freedom Post-9/11

BESHARA DOUMANI

Academic freedom in the United States is facing its most important threat since the McCarthy era of the 1950s. In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, government agencies and private organizations have been subjecting universities to an increasingly sophisticated infrastructure of surveillance, intervention, and control. In the name of the war against terrorism, civil liberties have been seriously eroded, open debate limited, and dissent stifled.[1]

Be careful what books you buy or borrow from the library. The Department of Homeland Security, under the terms of the Orwellian-named Patriot Act, could monitor you. A further provision of that law threatens criminal prosecution of anyone alerting you to government inspection of your selections.

Be careful what readings you assign in your classes. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was sued by the American Family Association Center for Law and Policy for assigning a brief introduction to Islam for incoming freshman students. Fortunately, the University held firm and the Court of Appeals dismissed the suit despite additional attacks by local politicians and some university trustees.

Be careful what articles you accept for publication. The U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control declared in February of 2004 that American publishers cannot edit works authored in nations under trade embargoes which include Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, and Cuba. The consequences are fines up to a million dollars and jail terms of up to ten years.

Be careful what you teach. In the fall of 2003 the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed Resolution 3077 to establish an "Advisory Board" to monitor area studies centers in order to ensure that they advance the "national interest." While the law would apply to all centers funded under the federal Title VI program, the target is clearly the nation's seventeen centers for Middle East Studies. The Association of American University Professors (AAUP), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), and most professional organizations have raised alarms about this unprecedented government invasion of the classroom. Among their concerns are the Board's sweeping investigative powers, lack of accountability, and makeup, as its members would be comprised, in part, from two agencies with national security responsibilities. If HR3077 is passed by the U.S. Senate a government-appointed investigative body would be allowed to police the classroom by deciding, for example, what constitutes a "diverse" or "balanced" lecture. This would effectively replace professional academic standards with arbitrary political criteria.

Be careful what you say in class or off-campus. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) founded by Lynn Cheney (spouse of Vice-President Dick Cheney) and Joseph Lieberman (Democratic Senator and former vice-presidential candidate) issued a report entitled, "Defending Civilization: How the Universities are Failing America and What Can Be Done about it," which accuses universities of being the weak link in the war against terror and a potential fifth column. A list of 117 "Un-American Professors" was posted on the organization's website with the offending statements they allegedly made.

Be careful if you apply for funding from the Ford or Rockefeller foundations. You will be asked to sign new standard grant letters which require you and your organization, in the case of Ford, not to promote or engage in "violence, terrorism, bigotry or the destruction of any state." Those familiar with public debates on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict long before September 11 will instantly recognize the code of this new language. It should come as no surprise to them that those changes were made in response to criticisms from—and then in consultation with—several Pro-Israel Jewish organizations upset at the fact that some of the human rights groups that censured Israel at the Durban Conference in South Africa had received funds from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. One of the problems with this language is that the terms are not defined. Would a lecture advocating the right of Islamist organizations, such as Hizbullah, to participate in the Lebanese political system be construed as promoting terrorism? Would research that argues in favor of the establishment of a bi-national state in Israel/Palestine instead of a two-state solution, be accused of promoting the "destruction" of a state? Elite universities such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Cornell, Columbia, Stanford, the University of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of Chicago have objected to this language, prompting some minor changes to it. So minor, in fact, that the ACLU, the major civil rights organization in the U.S., recently turned down a one million dollar grant from Ford and a $150,000 grant from Rockefeller. The ACLU press release stated that it was "a sad day when two of this country's most beloved and respected foundations feel they are operating in such a climate of fear and intimidation that they are compelled to require thousands of recipients to accept vague grant language which could have a chilling effect on civil liberties."

Be careful if you criticize Israeli government policies. National "Take Back the Campus" campaigns by privately funded organizations are targeting students and faculty connected academically or culturally to Muslim and Middle Eastern countries. Some of these organizations openly recruit students to inform on their professors and fellow students who are then "outed" under the charge of anti-Semitism. This is not simply a rhetorical battle: many professors who have been falsely accused were subjected to humiliating and damaging investigations by their own universities and the media. Major donors have been mobilized to pressure university administrators, leading the president of Harvard University, for example, to issue a statement that effectively equates criticism of Israeli policies with anti-Semitism.

Be careful if you are a non-U.S. citizen who is going to the U.S. to teach or study. Your visa could be revoked if you have views critical of U.S. policies as illustrated by the case of Professor Tariq Ramadan. Barriers to the entry or re-entry of non-US citizens based on political "profiling" (selective implementation of new policies depending on one's national/ethnic/religious background) have disrupted academic programs and sharply lowered the number of foreign graduate students in the U.S. The home institutions of those who do get visas are required to monitor these students and submit regular reports to government agencies. All these policies put into question the entire international component of U.S. academia.

We are at a crossroads and need to think carefully about how to reconfigure the concept and praxis of academic freedom.

The meanings of academic freedom

Are the dark clouds hovering over academic life in the United States a passing storm, albeit with "Islamic terrorism" replacing communism as the source of evil and danger, or are they harbingers of long-term structural

changes in the political economy of the production of knowledge in the age of empire? And what are the best strategies for protecting and enhancing academic freedom? These two questions raise many others such as: What are the legal structures, philosophical foundations, ethical practices, and political meanings of academic freedom? When and why did this concept emerge, and how have the ways it has been understood and practiced changed over time? How have institutions of higher education been transformed in terms of sources of funding, organizational structure, overall mission, academic programs, and social composition of the faculty and the student body? What is the relationship between areas studies and language acquisition, on the one hand, and the perceived needs of government agencies, on the other? What organizations, groups, and political forces are behind the current attacks on academic freedom and what are their goals?

Developing the best strategies for defending academic freedom depends on how this concept is understood and on what legal sources it draws. For example, is academic freedom primarily an individual right based, as most have come to believe and expect, on the First Amendment of the United States Constitution which enshrines the right of free speech? Or is it an institutional prerogative of private institutions having to do with a specific understanding of employer/employee relations? Robert Post, author of the Academic Freedom language for the University of California system and a leading member of the AAUP Committee on Academic Freedom, argues for the latter view. Just like justice is best advanced by judges who are employees yet have the right to freely exercise their judgment according to the law, not the whims of the government, knowledge as a public good is best served by the unfettered pursuit by faculty of three key areas of their work: research and writing, teaching, and to a lesser extent, extra-mural speech. In this scheme of things, professional academic standards and norms constitute the shield that protects this freedom while internally regulating and constraining it.

The invocation of professional norms may indeed be the most effective immediate defence, but what about public universities, students, the right of free speech outside of campus, and the epistemological problem of how norms are defined? If professional norms have a history, then academic freedom is the product of ongoing critical scrutiny and reinterpretation of the norms themselves combined with an ethical practice that negotiates between multiple norms in contestation with each other. As Judith Butler has argued, it is important to deconstruct and historicize the notion of professional norms in order to provide greater freedom for extramural political speech so that the lines between areas of expertise and political commentary, between individual rights and institutional prerogative, and between the public good and the institutional autonomy, are not too rigidly drawn. Under the pragmatic rational of "social benefit" of the free pursuit of knowledge, the U.S. Supreme Court issued several decisions that have made academic freedom an important part of the First Amendment, but only when it comes to public institutions. Considering the fairly brief history of academic freedom in U.S. Constitutional law, the very conservative make-up of the current Supreme Court, and the increasing weight of "security considerations" during a time of war, the very same pragmatic bent can undermine hard earned freedoms.[2]

Since the Second World War, institutions of higher learning have radically changed: universities are no longer the preserve of a tiny elite, nor limited to the classical curriculum of liberal arts and the sciences. The "multi-versity" of today is home to a much larger and more diverse student body and its mission has expanded to serve a stunningly wide range of intellectual, research, and service objectives. At the same time, universities have become much more dependent on donations from wealthy donors, on joint ventures with corporations, and on government funds for research projects and academic programs. In the current economic environment, most are starved for resources and administrators are much more vulnerable to the myriad ways in which outside forces are reshaping the landscape of intellectual production. Political engagement by faculty and students is essential if they are to have a say in shaping the demographic, economic, and institutional transformation of higher education.

Of war and peace

It is no accident that the issue of academic freedom was thrust into the limelight after 11 September 2001. The two authoritative statements on academic freedom in the United States were both articulated by the AAUP one year after the outbreak of major wars. The first was the 1915 *Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure*. The second was the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. In the aftermath of 11 September the Bush administration declared a "war against terror." Unlike previous wars, however, this one is not against specific countries or regimes, but against an ill-defined enemy to be pursued everywhere with no end in sight. It is also the first global war in the information age, and a deeply unpopular one everywhere except in the United States and Israel. Consequently, it has to be discursively won and re-won on a daily basis by dominating the framing of debate and by stifling dissenting voices.

We are at a crossroads and need to think carefully about how to reconfigure the concept and praxis of academic freedom so that it can serve just as well in a world where war and systematic misinformation campaigns are the norm and where peace and the free pursuit of knowledge the exception. At stake is the continuation of the academy as the bastion of informed, independent, and alternative perspectives crucial to a better understanding of the world we live in. If teachers and students cannot think and speak freely, who can?

PHOTO BY SUSAN C. DRUDING, 2001

Free speech rally at Sproul Plaza, UC Berkeley, September 2001

Beshara Doumani teaches history of the modern Middle East at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the editor of *Family History in the Middle East: Household, Property, and Gender* (State University of New York Press, 2003). He would like to learn more about academic freedom issues outside the U.S.
E-mail: bdoumani@berkeley.edu.

Notes

1. This article is based on issues raised at a University of California, Berkeley conference in February 2004 under the title "Academic Freedom After September 11." See the forthcoming edited volume by B. Doumani, *Academic Freedom After September 11* (Zone Books).
2. This and the following paragraph are based on Philippa Strum's legal history of First Amendment cases and Kathy Frydl's study of the institutional transformation of the University of California system, both of which address in very concrete terms the theoretical and legal issues raised by Post and Butler (in Doumani, forthcoming).

From Showcase to Basket Case
Education in Iraq

NABIL AL-TIKRITI

Iraq's academic professionals continue to face an uphill struggle to maintain standards following years of sanctions and months of social chaos. Although some may remain optimistic about a future free of centralized ministerial oversight and autocratic governance, many more feel bitterness for the lack of international support offered since the beginning of the US/UK invasion and subsequent occupation. As with so much of post-war Iraq, the higher education sector is yet another area where US military, political, and bureaucratic intervention has proven more damaging than revitalizing.

Times are hard for professors in Iraq today—very hard. Since the US/UK "coalition of the willing" invaded the country in March 2003 and forcibly evicted the country's sovereign government, an estimated 10-15% of Iraq's 16,500 instructors spreads across some 20 universities have left the country. In addition to facing bitterly disappointed expectations of US institutional support in the past 20 months, professors have been forced to cope with widespread looting, targeted violence, campus politicization, and institutional uncertainty. Although some actors remain optimistic about a future for a higher education sector liberated from a stifling and highly centralized state control, most remain apprehensive about the same sector liberated from sources of funding, professors, and campus civility.

Times were not always so bad. Iraq's universities were a proud part of the national patrimony from the 1950's to the 1980's, and were widely considered among the region's best throughout this period. Observers recall a vibrant and exciting 1970's, when the university sector engaged in international research ventures, published top-flight in the humanities and the sciences, surveyed the country's unrivalled archaeological sites, catalogued Iraq's impressive manuscript holdings, and sent its best graduates to earn Ph.D.'s at the foremost research universities in Europe and North America. Many of those internationally educated graduates returned home in the 1980's and provided the scientific expertise needed to build the state's advanced arms programmes in that time of war.

Although the growth and elaboration of higher education continued through much of the 1980's, the twin effects of state Saddamization and compulsory fiscal restraint during the long and difficult Iran-Iraq War began to sap the energy and vibrancy of the universities. By the end of the decade, the good times had clearly passed as state monitoring of campus politics began to negatively affect retention of academic talent. Yet, by the war's end education professionals could still hope to be optimistic about a long-waited post-war future.

The beginning of the end for Iraqi higher education dates to the government's ill-advised hostile takeover of Kuwait in 1990. After the international community mobilized to enforce the illegality of an unprovoked and unsanctioned invasion of one sovereign country by another, Iraq found itself facing a crushing sanctions regime and hefty reparation requirements vis-a-vis Kuwait. Iraqis initially expected to endure a few months of financial difficulty until the UN Security Council disarmament protocols could be carried out. Instead, the sanctions regime continued for nearly thirteen years, primarily due to US and UK insistence.

Trapped in a formerly affluent society now forced to prioritize procurement of basic necessities, Iraq's universities faced gradual decline throughout the 1990's. Higher education suffered not only from internationally enforced neglect, but the sector also found itself physically and intellectually cut off from the rest of the world. Under sanctions, international exchanges ended completely, journal subscriptions were prohibited, high technology purchases were forbidden, and spare parts for previously purchased equipment were halted. Famously, even pencils were embargoed due to the "dual use" capability of lead. Combined with the continuing strictures on intellectual curiosity springing from an increasingly apprehensive and insecure authoritarian ruling elite, many of the country's most talented academics found the situation unbearable and emigrated. An estimated 10,000 instructors left the country in the 1990's.[1] In spite of such adversity, those professors who remained managed to maintain academic standards through increasingly desperate forms of improvisation. For example, in order to keep up with scientific advances, medical school instructors annually obtained from Jordan a single copy of relevant medical textbooks, which were then provided to photocopiers for class distribution. Although scientific research ground to a halt, university instruction continued.

Looting strips the campuses

The final *coup de grace* for Iraq's academe occurred in the chaos which followed the fall of the Ba'athist government in April 2003. Expressing anger, frustration, and consternation about a suddenly fallen state sector, various elements took privatization of government institutions—like universities—into their own hands with a wave of mass lootings. It has been suggested that officials carried out some of the looting to erase a contentious past. Although that may be true for several sensitive state facilities, the university looters seem to have largely consisted of urban poor. While the effect of the looting was spread unevenly throughout the country, the damage to many facilities was devastating. Various library facilities were looted and/or burned, as were much of the holdings of such cultural repositories and research institutions as the Baghdad Museum, National Archives, Awqaf Library, Iraqi Academy of Sciences, and Bayt al-Hikma. The looting of campus offices destroyed much of the institutional memory of Iraq's universities. Student records, personnel records, faculty files, and many other sorts of records which provide the "nuts and bolts" of education administration were lost — as they were in so many other sectors.[2] To Iraqis, the looting of April 2003 was only the most recent act of a long-term conspiracy to "keep Iraq down" rather than an unfortunate example of "stuff happening" when an authoritarian regime collapses. As one Iraqi saying had it when the government fell and the former president disappeared, "now the student has left—and the master has arrived."

University life in occupied Iraq

Iraqi professors, students, and administrators had reason to hope that their situation might improve. Unfortunately, the period following the establishment of the US/UK occupation can largely be characterized as "one step forward, two steps backward" and has only served to confirm Iraqi suspicions concerning US motives. The anticipated reconstruction support from US institutions never materialized on a scale capable of restoring the tattered glory of Iraq's universities due partly to policy choice, and partly to circumstance.

The Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has calculated that $1.2 billion is needed for university rehabilitation. Against that need, the ministry has been allocated approximately $20 million in benefits from USAID contracts awarded to American universities, and $20 million from other international donors.[3] Not only is that amount

tiny compared to the estimated required amount, it is also a drop in the bucket against the $18.6 billion total funds approved by the US Congress for Iraqi reconstruction in November 2003. In one sense, it has made little difference—only an estimated 20% of such reconstruction funds had been disbursed by June 2004 in any case.[4]

From the beginning, US administrators allocated funding in accordance with short term US interests rather than long-term Iraqi interests. The Republican party apparatchiks sent by the Bush Administration to staff the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) did the best they could, but the strictures of neo-conservative policy goals designed to "spread democracy" seriously undermined any efforts to remedy the situation at hand. For example, it was felt to be of the highest priority to ensure that every primary school student in the country received new textbooks, complete with USAID-approved re-interpretations of Iraqi, Arab, and Islamic history. Combined with a widely-advertised initiative to leave no primary or secondary school unpainted, the pre-university sector received an estimated 7-8 times more funding support than higher education from the US government and the World Bank—betraying a prioritization of the mass indoctrination of Iraqi youth through new textbooks over the restoration of Iraq's regional pre-eminence in higher education.[5]

As with other Iraqi state assets, there was briefly some discussion of setting up private "international" educational institutions to compete with, and perhaps supplant, state higher education facilities. However, like so much else that has been envisioned since the spring of 2003, this idea has yet to materialize beyond a couple of pilot efforts. These institutions, the "American Liberal Arts University of Iraq" in Arbil and the "College of Democracy," are both located in Northern Iraq and are closely identified with former CPA Higher Education Advisor John Agrestos.

Another priority of US administrators appears to have been providing corporate welfare to US companies in the form of reconstruction contracts. This mode of funding has so far led to a uniquely American brand of corporate corruption, whereby US taxpayers pay top dollar to US companies for basic jobs like painting primary schools. In turn, the US companies hire local subcontractors at pennies on the dollar to physically fulfill the contracted work. The leakage implied in such a contracting protocol would rival any patronage system of the type routinely condemned by World Bank and IMF investigators in less wealthy societies. Although this sort of structure has been somewhat less in evidence in the higher education sector than in other sectors, the overall effect has been to bleed the US economy while robbing Iraqis of sovereignty over their own institutions.

One of the most damaging CPA decisions concerning the universities sprung from the wider US goal of "de-Ba'athification." In May 2003, newly-appointed CPA head Paul Bremer announced a comprehensive policy of de-Ba'athification for state employees above the middle ranks. Even prior to Bremer's announcement, Iraqi public opinion—and a couple of targeted assassinations—forced many unpopular campus Ba'athist apparatchiks into hiding. However, after this wide-ranging decree, public education institutions found themselves robbed of much of their best talent, as CPA advisor and education commissar Andrew Erdmann oversaw the expulsion of an estimated 1,400 university instructors for Ba'ath party membership.[6] Although many of these professionals were later rehired, the institutional damage has been considerable.

Research professionals associated with the former government's weapons development programme found themselves detained by US officials in prison camps. The most notable example is Amer al-Sa'adi, an Iraqi scientist who became famous before the war for denying, accurately, that Iraq had any weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Anticipating a quick release once Iraq's lack of WMD became known, Dr. al-Sa'adi turned himself in to US forces immediately after Baghdad's fall. He remains in detention, and repeated calls for his release through an international petition drive led by his German wife, who survived the August 2003 Canal Hotel bombing while arguing his case to UN officials, have to date failed to sway US authorities.

In addition to the physical damage endured in the wave of looting and the staff depletion caused by Bremer's decree and other US actions, the universities have faced serious issues of campus and personal security. Since March 2003, at least 200 academics have faced violent attacks, the fate of 75 kidnapped instructors remains unknown, and at least 14 professors have been murdered in a targeted fashion. In light of such danger, it should come as no surprise that an estimated 1,600-2,000 university instructors have left the country.[7] Those professors remaining behind have been obliged to face the inevitable politicization of campus life that followed the collapse of a system designed to carefully channel political energies towards centrally-mandated goals for more than a generation. Campuses quickly became arenas for intense political competition between groups affiliated with various factions of the Iraqi political scene. While public political discussion was a welcome change for many in the new order, such politicization has proved disruptive to campus civility and intimidated many. A recent academic visitor from Jordan was warned against visiting campuses because there were "spies" who might inform on the stranger's presence.

PHOTO BY FALEH KHEIBER / © REUTERS, 2003

Iraqi students pass a U.S. soldier at Baghdad University, 6 July 2003.

Against all odds, Iraq's university staff carries on: physical plants have been repaired, new structures of institutional governance have been established, and library collections have been re-organized with the addition of some book shipments. However, such activities continue in the face of a shoestring budget, meagre international support, and a myriad of security problems. The combination of staff shortfall and financial constraints has grown so dire in recent months that 134 Ph.D. programmes have been eliminated throughout the university system.[8] As a sign of just how precarious the security situation has become for government officials, the Ministry of Education was hit by a car bomb in the first week of November 2004. In light of all the obstacles, in some sense it is remarkable that higher education continues at all in Iraq. The fact that it does is a tribute to the courage and pride of Iraq's educators.

Nabil Al-Tikriti is Assistant Professor of Middle East History at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, USA.
Email: naltikriti@yahoo.com

Notes

1. LaFranchi, "Iraq Losing its Best and Brightest," Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, http://www.iwpr.net/ archive/ipm/ipm_186.html.
2. For an early overview of the state of Iraq's post-war higher education sector and intellectual life, see Keith Watenpaugh, Edouard Méténier, Jens Hanssen, and Hala Fattah, "Opening the Doors: Intellectual Life and Academic Conditions in Post-War Baghdad," July 15, 2003, http://www.h-net.org/about/press/opening_doors/opening_doors.pdf.
3. Christina Asquith, "With Little More Than Hope, Iraqi Colleges Try to Rebuild," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 13, 2004, http://chronicle.com/weekly/v50/i49/49a03701.htm.
4. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Mistakes Loom Large as Handover Nears," *Washington Post*, June 20, 2004.
5. Asquith, "With Little More Than Hope."
6. Ibid.
7. LaFranchi, "Iraq Losing its Best and Brightest."
8. Asquith, "With Little More Than Hope."

Islamist Responses to Educational Reform

JOHANNES GRUNDMANN

There is no doubt that the events of 11 September 2001 have had far-reaching consequences for the international perception of education systems in the Islamic world. The US government, in particular, has strongly criticized both religious schools outside state control and national educational curricula as sites of possible Islamic militancy. As a result, many Arab states, including Jordan, have witnessed public debates in which members of national governments and Islamist opposition groups appear at odds about the need for curriculum changes and educational reform.

Since 9/11 the United States has put pressure on several Muslim majority states to introduce extensive curriculum changes to prevent the further spread of extremist Islamist ideas. In 2003 Donald Rumsfeld spoke of a "war of ideas" and connected this expression with his perception of religious schools in the Islamic world as hotbeds of Islamist terrorism. In addition, the US administration criticized official school and university curricula as being partly responsible for the spreading of radical ideas among Muslim youth. Some observers argued that this line of criticism was far too general because it ignored that the role of religion in the education system varies from country to country. Others pointed out that the most extremist ideas are circulated by writings available in bookshops found almost all over the Islamic world while normally not included in official curricula.

Arab responses to American demands

Official reactions to American demands were crystallized by the Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO) Abdalaziz al-Tuwaijri, who admitted certain shortcomings in policies on education, but rejected any link between the present school curricula and terrorism.[1] But this position did not reflect actual political practice. Although it would go beyond the scope of this article to offer a detailed explanation of the complex connection between curricula and extremism, it is certainly true that states such as Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and most other GCC member states started to work on the assumption that a direct link actually existed. These states had realised that future economic aid and/or cooperation in other important fields would depend on their willingness to reform their curricula. Those states that dealt with moderate Islamism through integration (Jordan, Kuwait, Yemen) were aware that such measures would have a negative impact on their relationship with Islamist opposition groups. Curricula had been an issue of internal controversies in several Islamic states before 9/11, but the pressure the US now put on national governments led to an increased public interest in educational reform within the Islamic world. Moreover, the unexpected Western attention to school curricula added an almost global visibility to these controversies.

The Arab world responded in various ways to the American demands. In 2001, Yemen began to supervise the subjects taught at religious schools of the Islamist Islah party. At the same time, the government refused to restrict the autonomy of al-Iman University which had aroused American suspicion. All proposals to replace the curricula in use at al-Iman University by those of sharia departments at national universities were consequently blocked. In Kuwait, the government presented a strategy to reform the national education system in 2004, which involved a new structure of primary and secondary education. The Islamist opposition viewed this project as a prelude to even more fundamental changes, which would massively reduce their influence on schools, universities, and ministries. As a result, the mere suggestion to integrate faculties of Sharia into faculties of Law was enough to create a storm of indignation. The most extensive public discussion so far has taken place in Saudi Arabia where almost all sections of society have participated in a debate about the pros and cons of educational reforms. While many voices support the idea of educational reforms in principle, and acknowledge that new methods of instruction are absolutely inevitable, the American demands are seen as an attack on national sovereignty.[2]

Islamists and educational reform in Jordan

In Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood and its political wing, the Islamic Action Front party, quickly lead the opposition to a project known as *masfufat as-salam*[3] (an educational plan to promote peace) which had been prepared by the Ministry of Education and was put before the Jordanian parliament in the spring of 2004. According to state officials, the *masfufa* was meant to bring the Jordanian educational system into line with global trends that encourage the spread of justice, tolerance, and equality of opportunities. Over a period of several years, concepts and ideas concerning topics such as human rights, civil society, and inter-religious dialogue would be inserted into textbooks dealing with Arabic language and literature, Islamic education, national culture, and contemporary history.

Whereas many teachers either welcomed or prepared to accept the planned changes, Islamists categorically rejected them, citing as their reasons aversion to external interference in Jordanian life in general and disapproval of foreign influence on the national education system in particular. Using the *masfufa* to propagate their political message, they equated the concept of *thaqafat as-salam* (culture of peace), which is of crucial importance to the *masfufa*, with *thaqafat al-istislam* (culture of surrender). The *masfufa* as a whole was presented as the result of foreign interference aimed at the consolidation of the American and Israeli positions in the region by undermining the religious identity of Middle Eastern Muslims. The Islamists put forward that the liberation of Palestine was not explicitly mentioned in the new curricula and that some contents were in contradiction to the basic principles of Islam. Some Islamists also pointed out that textbooks had already been changed more than once since the signing of the peace-treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994. Moreover, the American criticism was perceived as part of a globalization process exclusively shaped by the West. In this context, the UNESCO, which had helped to realise a number of educational reform projects in the Islamic world long before 9/11, was presented as a key element of American and Israeli foreign policy.

While many voices support . . . educational reforms . . . the American demands are seen as an attack on national sovereignty.

From the very beginning the Islamists sought to co-operate with other political forces such as nationalists and traditionalists. Ishaq al-Farahan, one of the leading moderate Islamists and a former Minister of Education, proposed that the curriculum be modified to reflect *thaqafat muqawamat al-ihtilal* (a culture of resistance to occupation) rather than *thaqafat as-salam* (a culture of peace). Although terms such as *thaqafat muqawamat al-ihtilal* and *manahij al-muqawama* (resistance curricula) unquestionably lack substance, some nationalists joined in and proposed the

liberation of Palestine as a basic theme in any revised curriculum. At the same time, they used the debate to denounce what they described as *thaqafat as-sulta* (state culture/culture of power). Politicians, scholars, and intellectuals who supported the ideas behind the *masfufa* were thereby effectively subsumed under the banner of those in power.

Despite their warning that the *masfufa* implies grave dangers for Jordanian society, Jordanian Islamists seem convinced they can at least partially counter its effects. In their opinion, identities cannot be changed by means of deleting or adding certain words and expressions in the curriculum. Replacing a passage from the works of Mawdudi with a paragraph on Islamic art, for example, will not achieve the intended goal. The influential Egyptian Muslim Brother, 'Isam al-'Iryan, likewise stated in an interview with a Jordanian Islamist weekly that family and mosque were as important to a true Islamic education as the school, and emphasized that they needed further attention in the light of current events.[4] Jordanian Islamists also compare the present situation of external interference and internal opposition to the context which led to the anti-normalization campaign directed against all efforts to strengthen political, economic and cultural co-operation between Jordan and Israel. Despite the existence of a ratified peace treaty most contacts have been reduced to a minimum.

At the same time, Jordanian Islamists share the fears of their counterparts in Kuwait. The Muslim Brotherhood's decision to cooperate with the state in most areas, which has characterised domestic politics since the foundation of the Hashemite Kingdom, definitely paid off in the field of education. They were allowed to establish their own schools and managed to occupy important posts at the faculties of Sharia. In addition, they placed their members quite skilfully inside the Ministry of Education so that they were able to influence the development of official curricula. Members of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood also worked as advisers to ministries of Education all over the Gulf region. But in the nineties some Islamists occupying important positions in the field of education were replaced due to conflicts between the government and the Islamist opposition. Most of these conflicts were directly related to the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. Jordanian Islamists are now in great anxiety that their influence will be systematically reduced in the course of the anticipated reforms. The public debate on curricula changes is obviously far from over. The Jordanian Ministry of Education indicated that the implementation of the *masfufa* would not start before 2005/2006 so as not to obstruct the current debate which is intended to bring about a national consensus.

Educational reform in Jordan and much of the broader Arab world is not only about the future contents of textbooks, but also about those who teach the texts and, above all, about those who define the basis of education policy. Faced with the current situation, the states concerned have to think about the future role of moderate Islamists in national education systems as a whole. As a result internal opposition will increase even further, whereas external pressure will not stop until new strategies and plans are actually implemented. National governments find themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand, it is true that the integration of moderate Islamists has often served as an element of political and social balance in periods of crisis. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the current debate on educational reforms is directly linked with Western interests and to a number of Middle Eastern Middle trouble spots, which leaves national governments little room for manoeuvre. Although there is no indication that the strategic choice of integration will be completely revised in the light of the current controversies, it is hard to imagine that a national consensus on new curricula is still within reach. The question is whether effective educational reforms can do without such a consensus.

Johannes Grundmann is a Ph.D. student at Ruhr-University Bochum in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies.
Email: Johansgrundmann@gmx.de

Notes

1. *Al-Hayat*, February 20, 2004.
2. For further details on the debate about curricula changes in the Arab world see: *al-Hayat*, Febuary 17, 2004.
3. Its full title is *masfufat mafahim huquq al-insan wa-thaqafat al-salam wa'l-qiyam al-alamiyya al-mushtaraka* (a project set up to promote human rights, a culture of peace, and global values).
4. *Al-Sabeel*, March 16-22, 2004.

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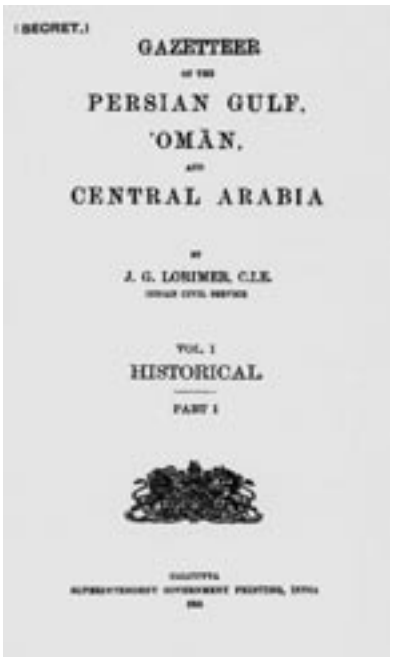
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The Arab Gulf States

International relations and Economic Development
British India Office Political and Secret Files, *c*. 1914-1948

Editor: Penelope Tuson, Former Curator of Middle East Archives, Oriental & India Office Collections (OIOC, now part of the Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections), British Library

The first half of the twentieth century was a period of unprecedented change in the Arab Gulf states. Because of their strategic and geopolitical importance on the route between Europe and Asia, these tiny desert shaikhdoms had for centuries been the focus of international attention. However, the discovery of potentially vast reserves of oil in the 1920s and 1930s began an unprecedented transformation which was eventually to produce the vibrant and powerful modern city states of today.

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Mahmoud Darwish
Hope as Home in the Eye of the Storm

ASHWANI SAITH

They can't break or occupy my words!

We do not seek to be victims, nor do we seek to be heroes — all that we want is to be ordinary.

Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish was the recipient of the Prince Claus Fund Principal Award for 2004. The ISIM, in cooperation with the Prince Claus Fund, Bak, and the NCDO, organized a poetry reading in Amsterdam at 29 November 2004. Indian economist Ashwani Saith introduced Darwish and pondered on the meaning of his poetry to migrants and people everywhere.[1]

Mahmoud Darwish is a poet, the national poet of the non-existent state of Palestine, and the voice of a silenced people who are homeless at home and refugees in their own country. He also has the unquestioned stature of an Arab poet of the first rank. "Many people in the Arab world feel their language is in crisis; and it is no exaggeration to say that Mahmoud is considered a saviour of the Arab language," says Subhi Hadidi, the Syrian poetry critic. At his readings in Cairo or in Damascus, Darwish draws people in the thousands, though he has said, "I like being in the shadows, not in the light." At one recent reading in Beirut, over 25,000 people turned up in a football stadium. Inevitably, the audience included doctors and workers, housewives and professionals, taxi drivers and academics. This wide appeal and intense bond between the poet and his people goes beyond ephemeral politics or literary fashion, and is rooted in the ongoing upheavals, exclusions, and oppressions that are being so widely experienced in contemporary times in the region, but above all, in occupied Palestine.

Fiercely independent, Darwish has continually struggled for the Palestinian homeland. He remains an implacable opponent of the Israeli occupation. But he, like the late Edward Said, is also scathingly critical of an Arab continent "fast asleep under repressive regimes," where soccer seems to have replaced Palestine as the Arab passion.[2] As a poet, he is critically acknowledged for the sheer beauty and technical virtuosity of his work. Its power lies in its lyrical simplicity, musicality, beauty, and literary quality. Although recognised as a Palestinian poet, he does not wish to gain praise arising from any motive of solidarity; even in the late 1960s he wrote, "we want you to judge us as poets, not as resistance poets."

The identity of a poet

The identity of Darwish as a poet, however, is inextricably entwined with that of the struggles of the Palestinian people. Living as a poet in a state of human bondage, his creativity, his imagination, and the images and meanings that his words carry, are all mortgaged to the reality of Palestinian "unfreedom." His poetry, with its inseparably interwoven themes of love and struggle, is itself manifestly a hostage to this incarceration. When I first read his justly famous gentle lines to his mother, I must confess that each thought, phrase, string of words, came to me as a yearning for the caressing embrace of Home.

I long for my mother's bread
My mother's coffee
Her touch
…
And if I come back one day
Take me as a veil to your eyelashes
Cover my bones with the grass
Blessed by your footsteps
Bind us together
With a lock of your hair
With a thread that trails from the back of your dress
…
I am old
Give me back the star maps of childhood
So that I
Along with the swallows
Can chart the path
Back to your waiting nest.

[extract]

And so it surely must have spoken to every Palestinian, or any other of a mother born. Ironically, in contrast to the feelings his words evoke, Darwish laments: "Sometimes I feel as if I am read before I write. When I write a poem about my mother, Palestinians think my mother is a symbol for Palestine. But I write as a poet, and my mother is my mother. She's not a symbol. "Mother" was a poet writing a simple confession that he loves his mother, but it became a collective song. All my work is like that. I don't decide to represent anything except myself. But that self is full of collective memory." For Darwish, the search is for freedom from this handcuffing of the poetic imagination as much as his life: "The subject of occupation itself becomes a burden," he says in anger. "I want, both as a poet and as a human being, to free myself from Palestine. But I can't. When my country is liberated, so shall I be."[3]

His poetry gives power to the tired and forlorn, to revive, restore, and relive the imagined mobile space called home; to feeling the pain of being cut to the quick by the jagged mirrors of memory, to excavating emotions put away and buried in long-locked caskets. It is a poetry of loss, of desolation, of doomed efforts, but significantly also of truth, hope, reconciliation. On an open palm, Darwish offers a key. The dehumanizing of the other in the imagination can perhaps be all too easily explained or condoned in the context of the lives that are being sucked into the vicious vortex of violence. But even while Darwish recognises the long roots of anger, irrigated red by each new cycle of suppression, he also transcends these barricades, without denying them or making them invisible, through a simultaneous recognition of the mutuality of traumas, confusions, as also of mutual aspirations of coexistence and peace.

In bidding farewell to Edward Said, his age-long friend, fellow traveller, and visionary, Darwish returned to the early days: "time was less wild then … We both said: if the past is only an experience, make of the future a meaning and a vision … Let us go into tomorrow trusting the candour of imagination …"[4] The idealism persists. Darwish takes a brave stand for dialogue—for standing up, facing, engaging, embracing the understandings, perceptions, perspectives of the other—for the washing away of the gruesome grime of violence and the now-blackened congealed stains of hurt through a mutual recognition of truths in the full glare of the denied rights and recent history of the Palestinians. The case for the Palestinian homeland must be comprehended and accepted through such osmosis. Not many have walked this difficult path.

Several of Mahmoud Darwish's books have been translated into Hebrew, and he has written several tender nuanced portraits of his Jewish friends and lovers. In March 2000, the Israeli education minister proposed that some of his works be included as an optional part of the multi-cultural school curriculum—but Israeli polity was adamantly hostile and apparently not ready to open Israeli youth to the words of the other. When Israeli occupation forces ransacked the Sakakini Cultural Centre, from where he edits the highly regarded quarterly literary review *Al-Karmel*, his and his fellow poets' manuscripts were trampled under foot. "I know they are strong and can invade and kill anyone. But they can't break or occupy my words." His is the defiant voice of the silenced that can be heard above the chatter of politicians and the clatter of gunfire.

PHOTO BY BASSEM AZZAWI, 2004

Poetry reading by Mahmoud Darwish, Amsterdam, 29 November 2004

Recently, Mahmoud Darwish organized a delegation of eminent writers, including some Nobel laureates such as Wole Soyinka, to visit Palestine and see for themselves the realities of the occupation. This is how he ended his welcome address to them in Ramallah: "We have an incurable malady: hope. Hope in liberation and independence. Hope in a normal life where we are neither heroes nor victims. Hope that our children will go safely to their schools. Hope that a pregnant woman will give birth to a living baby, at the hospital, and not a dead child in front of a military checkpoint; hope that our poets will see the beauty of the colour red in roses rather than in blood; hope that this land will take up its original name: the land of love and peace…"

The universal appeal of the poet and Laureate

The Prince Claus Fund in the Netherlands bestowed their Principal Award for 2004 on Mahmoud Darwish. In selecting Asylum and Migration as the theme for year 2004, the Prince Claus Fund expressed its desire to draw public attention and reflection to the positive contributions of migrants to host societies. Underlying its choice, perhaps, was a latent motivation to challenge the negative labels and images that have recently been imposed by parts of the media and political spectrum on migrant communities in Europe, including the Netherlands. At present, xenophobic and Islamophobic prejudices are increasingly being purveyed as pseudo political commentaries. In parts of Europe girls wearing headscarves can with impunity be denied entry into a restaurant, shameful targets are being set by governments for the annual deportation of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants whose cheap labour is openly exploited in the economy in full public gaze, and politicians who declare Islam to be an intrinsically retarded faith are lionized and have their statues put up in city centres.

In words which could well reflect the sentiments of Prince Claus himself, the Prince Claus Fund declares that in making its awards, "special attention is paid to what are called zones of silence, areas where people are deprived by political or economic circumstances of the opportunity for free cultural expression." The hapless Palestinian people are trapped in such a zone of silence; a silence broken only by the spiteful spitting of guns that kill, by the snarling of tanks that crush, by vengeful slogans for mutual retribution, and by the refrain of mourning mothers and the wailing of fresh widows. In this deafening, despairing zone of silence, to what does one turn for recovering the self and re-humanizing the other? To poetry, says Mahmoud Darwish: "Poetry and beauty are always making peace. When you read something beautiful you find coexistence; it breaks walls down…"[5]

Yet who am I to write about Mahmoud Darwish, this poet of the first rank? What temerity, what presumptuousness from one who has not published a single line of verse. I speak with the soul of one about whom Darwish writes, to whom his words come alive as if he were whispering them in my ear, notwithstanding that irrelevant geographical detail that I am an Indian, not Muslim, and illiterate in Arabic. The Palestinian camps are as old as I, and I wonder how, and how long, I might have survived there. My parents were themselves refugees, subjects of an early episode of ethnic cleansing, so I was conceived in Lahore in Pakistan but born in Delhi, one of midnight's children. They were in the prime of their youth then. Now they are fragile octogenarians, still hankering, moist-eyed, after that Lahore that they loved and remember, and that was and remains "home" to this day. Likewise, nearly half a century later, my Kashmiri wife, her elderly parents, and family have all been cleansed out of their home and homeland, the valley of Kashmir, that heaven on earth that daily endures unearthly forms of hell. Since that time, the countries and peoples of the sub-continent have not been kind to each other, and whole populations have been wrenched from their roots and thrown one way or another and the upheavals continue apace. The African continent, alas, illustrates a parallel experience on a panoramic scale. New places become, or must become, home; and old homes become, or must be made to become, memories like fading, cherished photographs. But few of these transformations have been voluntary. Violence, homelessness, the loss of identity, the struggle for survival where life is demolished and has to be reconstructed each day in the eternal quest for the holy grail that is dignity: unfortunately but unquestionably, this condition of denial afflicts large swathes of populations. Darwish speaks of, to, and for, this lost estate of humanity. "Exile is more than a geographical concept. You can be an exile in your homeland, in your own house, in a room. It's not simply a Palestinian question."

Mahmoud Darwish, you are right! Eternal exile, who ticket-less travels the worlds, your imagination your wings, invisibly defying fortified borders, with no identity card, no gleaming polymerized passport, with little more than your scribbled verse as your visa—Mahmoud Darwish, you are so right!

I come from There and remember…
I have learned and dismantled all the words
to construct a single one: Home

Notes

1. A slightly different version of this article was published under the title, "Hope as Home in the Eye of the Storm: A Tribute to Mahmoud Darwish Recipient of the Prince Claus Fund's Principal Award for 2004," in *Prince Claus Fund Journal,* no.11:37-42.
2. Maya Jaggi, "Poet of the Arab World: Mahmoud Darwish," *Guardian*, June 8, 2002.
3. Spoken to William Dalrymple, see *Guardian,* G2, October 2, 2002.
4. In one of their conversations, Said exhorts Darwish: "Now, don't forget: If I die before you, my will is the impossible!" in Mahmoud Darwish, *"Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading,"* trans. Mona Anis*, al-Ahram Weekly,* September 30, 2004, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/print/2004/710/cu4.htm.
5. Says Darwish, who advocates dialogue with Israelis, "I always humanize the other. I even humanized the Israeli soldier. I will continue to humanize even the enemy …," cf. "A Soldier Who Dreams of White Lilies," written just after the 1967 war.

Ashwani Saith is Professor of Economics at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, and Professor of Development Studies at the London School of Economics.
E-mail: saith@iss.nl or a.saith@lse.ac.uk

Local Contexts of Islamism in Popular Media

LILA ABU-LUGHOD

Professor Lila Abu-Lughod delivered the ISIM Annual Lecture on 17 December 2004 at the Spiegelzaal, Utrecht University. She analyzed media portrayals of Islamism and religious extremism in popular Egyptian television dramatic serials and suggested that new media representations of Islamists, and the debates they sparked nationally, have contributed to reconfigurations of current notions of "religion" and "nation." Below is an abridged version of her lecture.[1]

A good deal of literature, before and since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and then *Covering Islam*, has taught us the myriad ways in which Islam has been represented negatively in the West. But long before the spectacular and specular violence of the exploding World Trade Center in New York City, many countries in the Arab Middle East had within their midst Islamist political groups that were oppositional to the regimes in power. In Egypt during the 1980s and 90s, for example, there was a sharp sense in elite circles and a widespread discourse disseminated through popular media that the nation was in danger of being torn apart from within. The state was portrayed as facing a political-cultural crisis, one that it dealt with mostly by force—through arrests, executions, and the arbitrary powers of a continually renewed state of emergency. The problem was represented publicly as religious extremism. The villains were the members of Islamic groups.

In the early 1990s I embarked on an ethnographic project to understand television's place in the Egyptian national imagination and in the everyday lives of people who are somewhat marginal to the nation—people who are neither middle class nor urban. I focused on the most popular genre of television programming, one for which Egypt is justly famous across the Arab world: the dramatic serial. Unlike soap operas, Egyptian serials are finite, consisting of 15 or 30 episodes, shown on consecutive evenings. And, because until well into the 1990s there were only a few television channels and first-run serials aired on only two of them, they were watched by a majority of the population and were often the subject of discussion in homes, and in the public sphere—in newspapers, magazines, and elsewhere. I was intrigued to find that television serials were often the vehicles for national debate. One of the big debates that television became part of in the mid-1990s was about what was called "extremism" or even "terrorism."

Television drama in Egypt in the 1990s reflected, if unevenly and with certain lags, concerns about the place of religion in society and nation. In keeping with its self-consciously pedagogical mission, it condemned, preached, and offered alternative models for the future. Accordingly, this research raised questions such as: Were television serials effective in their missions of smoothing over the divisions that, in the name of religion, threatened the Egyptian national body? Did media management of religion help create national community? Did mass media participate in the configuration and reconfiguration of "religion" and "nation" in Egypt? How did media representations of Islamic groups and "terrorists" operate in a Muslim majority context where, unlike in the West, the civilizational discourse of West and East could not be mobilized, Islamists or terrorists could only partially be represented as an outside enemy, and Islam could never be the alien other?

Good and bad Islam

Beginning in the late 1970s the rising visibility on the streets of Cairo and provincial cities and towns of a self-conscious Islamic identity represented a phenomenon that was noticeable to everyone and troubling to some. The movement ranged from increased piety among educated youth to some more sensational acts of violence committed by militant Islamic groups. The broad piety movement and the widespread feeling against cordoning off religion as a private matter of faith led television to capitulate to the desire for more religious programming and to try to appropriate for itself the role of supporter of a legitimate Islam.

In 1994, just after a new policy of confronting terrorism with media was announced, the serial *The Family* (*al-A'ila*), was produced to great fanfare, and some controversy. Written by Wahid Hamid, it showed, in its assessment by critics, how educated youth from disadvantaged backgrounds were drawn into terrorism, and how corruption was rife in these groups. Public opposition to the serial, not surprisingly, came from well-established moderate Islamist thinkers. In their jockeying in the press, both the moderate Islamist thinkers and government and television officials tried to align themselves with the religious authorities of al-Azhar. The Islamists stressed the number of letters and phone calls al-Azhar had received, urging them to take action to get the serial off the air. Controversy over a scene in which the enlightened modernist protagonist challenged the extremist on the doctrinal basis of certain beliefs had led to calls to halt broadcast of the serial. The Mufti, the leading government religious authority, used the press to clarify doctrine and offer a set of phone numbers for the public to use if they had questions about religious matters. The Minister of Information, however, speaking about a television broadcast that followed the serial (a documentary in which Islamist prisoners spoke about the error of their ways), responded with a statement that points to the heart of the official construction of religion. He said, "[T]here are repenters who speak with remorse and … discuss how it was that they came to …lose their faith in those erroneous ideas that led them to commit deviant terrorist activities…" Serials like *The Family* contrast the good, correct, and reasonable Islam of the people, the cultured and educated, al-Azhar, the state, and television with that of the bad, violent, misinformed, and twisted Islam of the extremists.

Many television writers claim to be secularists—that is, to believe in a separation between personal piety and the state, a legacy of their intellectual and political formation in the Nasserist period of the 1950s and 1960s that pushed secular ideals. Yet, despite the objections of such prominent television personnel and their own relative silence on religion in their serials, Egyptian television continued to increase religious programming in the 1990s, adding to the popular shows featuring Quranic exegeses by religious authorities big budget serials about the history of the Arab-Islamic world. These were broadcast alongside many more serials with plots or subplots about violent militants and serials explicitly about terrorism. There was good Islam and bad Islam and these judgments were made, ultimately, on the basis of how Islam related to the nation and social responsibility. They were not, as they might have been in the past, part of the struggle among religious authorities.

Restoring the honour of Upper Egypt

For more than half a century, revenge killing, or the vendetta, has been in the national imagination the cultural trait most associated with Upper Egypt. The obsession of northern, urban, educated people with the horrors of honour feuds and their condemnation of Upper Egyp-

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Filming of Egyptian TV serial, *Al-Khalas*

tians as backward and unenlightened can be found everywhere, from film to social science. Without denying the existence or importance of this practice to communities in the region, one must still be suspicious whenever a cultural trait is singled out and made to stand for a whole region or community and one must be even more suspicious when such a region is mapped as a place of new forms of violence: in the 1980s and 1990s Upper Egypt was linked to religious extremism.

However, a major shift occurred in the second half of the 1990s in television representations of Upper Egypt. The most popular of the serials to represent Upper Egypt balanced the theme of revenge with that of authentic values such as honour and integrity. The recent spate of serials set in Upper Egypt that depict positive qualities of the region are mostly the work of one writer, himself originally from Upper Egypt. Although based in Alexandria, Muhammad Safa' `Amir makes much of the fact that he was born in an Upper Egyptian town not far from Luxor. Even those from the south single out his work as not stereotyping them negatively, describing his serials as realistic because they focus on their "true" characteristics: generosity, courage, honesty, and valour. What these serials suggest is that Upper Egyptians are part of the nation; they do not live in a closed society and do not constitute a backward or frightening "other." The most important message is that they are by no means all religious extremists. Upper Egyptians, on the other hand, are being told through the serials that they have within their own traditions important values worth preserving and nurturing, values that are social, cultural, and regional, not particularly tied to religion. In other words, their true identities are not as Islamists but rather as people with an indigenous regional nobility and code of honour.

The attempts of the media to promote a culture stripped of religion may be even less healing of the torn civic body than its attempts to turn religion into a cultural system linked to the nation. This is because it bears little resemblance to local experiences. But insofar as regional values are offered as cultural ideals, the serials invoke a national frame, since regions are primarily defined by national territory. Upper Egypt only has meaning as a distinct region if understood as part of a larger Egyptian nation. And so again, the serials offer support for a united nation and a placing of religion within that nation.

Religion in a national public sphere

Recent work on Islamism and the history of Muslim reform in Egypt reminds us that mass media, from the press that flourished in the late nineteenth century to the television of the late twentieth century, is part of a distinct public sphere in which public intellectuals could debate and discuss norms, policies, and the future of the community and civilization. Scholars have been concerned about what the outlines of this public sphere are and how the changing terms of debate and discussion are set.

The Egyptian intelligentsia who produce television, film, theatre, and literature must be understood as having a certain independence from the state and labouring to a large extent in their own cultural fields. Yet there are significant points of collaboration and convergence between intellectuals and the state today. Nasserism had contributed to the doctrine of a demarcation of separate spheres of religion and state, even if Islamic ideals were never completely purged from morality, pious practices continued in all classes, and various accommodations were forged between state and religious institutions. What seems to be one of the outcomes of the debates in which television programs of the 1990s participated, is that religion has become once more an ideological hub of the public sphere, but now with a certain form of the modern nation-state so entrenched and established that "the nation," and what is good for the nation, forms the only legitimate ground for debates about religion. This is even so when viewers explicitly disagree with or criticize the representations of Islamists, or religiosity, that they watch.

The airing of these serials ends up, in a variety of ways, revealing and exacerbating social cleavages, perhaps undermining the government's and some secular intellectuals' intentions of creating national community by trying to discredit Islamists. This is mostly because television's enthusiasm for circumscribing religious sensibilities in its serials rubs up against widespread convictions. However, one should not infer from these failures that television does not foster national community through its treatments of religious extremism. It does so indirectly, though, by appropriating for itself the role of a charged and popular arena for public discussion of and debate about Islam. The arena is national and in this way contributes to an ongoing sense of the nation as the critical frame for all aspects of life, including the religious.

Even Egyptian television's negative stereotyping of Islamists, however accepted or refused by the public, operates within and reinforces the frame of the nation. It never places the Muslim outside the frame; instead it makes and sustains distinctions between good and bad Muslims. It also reflects on what place religious identity and observance should have in daily life and asks what role Islam should have in society at large. Even though some of the negative imagery used to represent Islamists in Egyptian television may be eerily similar to that which is becoming numbingly familiar in the West, the contexts of reception and the import of this imagery give it a fundamentally different meaning.

Note

1. The lecture by Lila Abu-Lughod was derived largely from Chapter 7 of her most recent book, *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt* (University of Chicago Press, 2005). The full text of the lecture will also be available as an ISIM Paper.

Lila Abu-Lughod is Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies, and Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Columbia University.
E-mail: la310@columbia.edu

Courtesans in the Living Room

KAMRAN ASDAR ALI

The courtesan has been a stock character in popular South Asian literature and movies. The popular Urdu novel, *Umrao Jan Ada,* was recently made into a lavish serialized television play in Pakistan. It raises questions about how popular television performances create a space for a discussion on gender politics in a rapidly changing cultural, social, and economic milieu of present-day Pakistan.

In spring of 2003, the new private television channel in Pakistan, Geo TV, created some controversy by telecasting with much fanfare Mirza Hadi Ruswa's early twentieth century Urdu novel, *Umrao Jan Ada* as its first serialized television play. Umrao, one of the most expensive TV series produced in Pakistan with lavish sets and costumes, depicts the life and times of a mid-nineteenth century courtesan in Lucknow which was the seat of power for the Nawabs of Awadh in North India. Courtesans in Lucknow were recognized as the preservers and performers of high culture of the court.[1] Courtesans held respect within the Nawabi court and young men of noble lineage were sent to their salons to learn etiquette, polite manners, and the art of literary appreciation. Yet they also provided sexual services, albeit to specific patrons, and were, therefore, not entirely considered part of the *ashraf*, the Muslim respectable gentry.

The politics

The courtesan (*tawaif*) has been a stock character in popular South Asian literature and movies. Indeed the "fallen woman" is universal in its appeal among readers of pulp and highbrow fiction. Yet in Pakistani films and literature the courtesan's character remains intertwined in a morality play and almost always achieves a tragic end (mostly commits suicide), repents for her "wayward" behaviour or, extremely rarely, becomes a *sharif bibi* (respectable woman), which for a courtesan may be akin to a social death. In contrast, in Rusva's novel the protagonist not only survives, but becomes a respectable poet and a wealthy patron of art without renouncing her past profession. In this sense the novel is unique in its empathetic treatment of courtesan culture.

The last few years have seen the proliferation of several texts and documentaries that relate the stories and condition of courtesans and sex workers in present day Pakistan. Two among them are noteworthy: *Taboo*, a detailed ethnography of sex workers in Lahore's red light district by Fouzia Saeed (2002), and *Tibbi Gallii*, a documentary about the same district produced by Feryal Gauhar. Both are sympathetic portrayals and explicitly expound a feminist sensibility in their handling of their subjects. To allow for a wider readership, *Taboo* was recently translated from English into Urdu. Yet it primarily remains an academic text. Gauhar's film has, however, not been widely distributed and has only been shown at select gatherings. These interventions do put forward an argument for re-evaluating the space of sex workers in contemporary Pakistani society; Geo TV's initiative can be understood as an extension of this thematic interest in courtesan life by liberal intellectuals. This opening allows Geo to produce *Umrao* in a country where extra marital sex legally remains a crime against the state and where memories of severe punishment for sexual liaisons under the Hudood Ordinance of the Zia-ul Haq era in the 1980s still resonate among the populace. Unlike the modest reach of the above-mentioned academic works, Geo's production brought courtesan life into domestic spaces (50 million of 150 million Pakistanis have access to TV) as it also intervened into a debate on morality, sexuality, and gender politics in present day Pakistan. Why, one might ask, have Pakistan's liberal intelligentsia and feminists chosen at this juncture to depict the life-world of the prostitute and the figure of the courtesan as metaphors to argue for sexual freedom and women's autonomy?

The narrative

Umrao, set in mid-nineteenth century northern India, is the story of a young girl who is kidnapped and sold to a *kotha* (lit: roof or household, the courtesan's salon) in Lucknow. Umrao grows up learning the skills of the trade with rigorous training in music, singing, dancing, poetry recitation, and the various etiquettes and idioms of courtesan life. The novel is written in the first person to create the illusion of an autobiographical narrative. This technique is retained in the TV serial by the director Raana Sheikh, a veteran TV producer and ex-managing director of the state owned Pakistani TV, and the script writer Zehra Nigah, a famous poet and literary personality.

As Umrao grows up accomplished in the various skills of courtesan life, she is much sought after by many members of the elite that frequent the kotha. She is eventually "given" for the first time to a respectable Nawab who retains the exclusive right to her company and maintains her through gifts and cash. This man becomes the first of many with whom Umrao is shown to, within the parameters of Pakistan's censors, have a sustained sexual relationship. There are many twists and turns in the story, but Umrao is always characterized as an extremely sympathetic person—a victim of circumstances beyond her control—with whom the audience can empathize and identify. Periodically the play does remind us that Umrao is a courtesan (with its contemporary connotation of a prostitute) and hence allows for the audience to create a distance from her guilt-free sexual relationships. Yet despite the techniques that the director uses to distance us from the protagonist's assertive sexual practices—perhaps to satisfy the censor—the audience is constantly exposed to and remains engrossed in Umrao's various relationships.

> The creators of this play… use the mid-nineteenth century milieu…to make a more contemporary case for women's emancipation and equity.

In addition, life in the kotha itself is portrayed in extremely women friendly terms. There is camaraderie among the younger women in the household and the audience gets the sense of a caring family. The strongest person in the entire household is the chief courtesan, Khanum, who rules over the household as a deft diplomat who has the power of coercion always at her disposal. The interesting aspect of this household is the secondary and dependent nature of the men. In traditional kothas, as depicted in the serial, men occupied the more subservient roles of servants, doormen, musicians, and instructors. Men, of course, were also wealthy patrons and benefactors. But even they, within this domain, deferred to the immense power that these women wielded in their own space and treated the courtesans as equals.

Further, in contrast to Pakistan's recent history of rising Islamic radicalism and the Islamization process of the Zia era, the play seeks to display a much more tolerant atmosphere not only in terms of gender relationships, but also in its depiction of Islamic authority. There is a retainer in the kotha, Moulvi Saheb, who is married to the main female

servant in the household. Moulvi Saheb teaches Umrao the Quran and religion, literature, and morals. He is portrayed as a man of religion, yet accepts the lifestyle of his surroundings with ease and grace. Similarly, in one episode Umrao runs away with her paramour and ends up in an unknown village after being abandoned. Here she finds the shaykh of the local mosque who generously gives her shelter and then helps her to establish herself as a local courtesan with her own kotha and clientele. These portrayals use the mid-nineteenth century Muslim society in North India, and its imagined tolerant social space where religious leaders and courtesans could co-exist, to implicitly critique the moral and theological extremism of contemporary life.

Gender, religion, and ethnicity

The choice of *Umrao Jan Ada* to argue for women's liberation and religious tolerance is an intriguing one. Historically modernist Muslim reformers of late nineteenth century opposed Nawabi culture, of which courtesan life was an integral part. Post-1857 Muslim reformers like the author Nazir Ahmed, Sayed Ahmed, the founder of Aligarh Muslim University, and the poet Altaf Husein Hali (inlcluding Deobandi religious reformers) in their writings argued against the extravagance, impiety, and ignorance of the Nawabi era, which according to them was the cause of Muslim backwardness. In contrast they advocated the pursuit of knowledge, piety, and restraint. Describing this transformation among the late-nineteenth century Muslim middle class households, Gail Minault rightly points out that the emphasis was on being noble rather than high born. A *sharif* gentleman was "pious without being wasteful, educated without being pedantic and restrained in his expression of emotion."[2] This ideal was in sharp contrast to the Mughal Nawabs and the wealthy land owning aristocracy, those that are depicted in *Umrao* and who sustained the lifestyle of the courtesans themselves.

It appears that the female director and script writer of *Umrao* sought to make an implicit argument against those tendencies of Muslim reformist thought, whether secular or religious (Deobandi), that asked women to distance themselves from the realm of custom which was deemed superstitious, un-Islamic, and irrational. This reformism indeed aided some women to gain more rights within the emerging middle-class household. For example, literacy skills along with modes of reformed behaviour did open spaces for women to articulate their rights in marriage and property. Yet, these gains were at the cost of losing separate spheres of female activity that were condemned by the modern reformists as the realm of the *nafs*, the area of lack of control and disorder.[3] The creators of this play through their depiction of female spaces, use the mid-nineteenth century milieu to invoke this sense of disorder/sexual themes and link it to an older oral tradition of women's narrative construction and other forms of popular performances—the arena of reformist attack—to make a more contemporary case for women's emancipation and equity.

In invoking this past the producers present an alternative narrative of custom, traditional space, and Muslim religious practice. This move to reinvent the past as tolerant and inclusive is linked to a liberal political agenda that is in opposition to an earlier generation of modernist thinkers. Using late-nineteenth century North India as a backdrop, this serial confronts the more homogenizing elements of Islamic politics in Pakistani society; a major political task for liberals in present day Pakistan. The play's implicit portrayal of a more tolerant and inclusive national entity interestingly enough also relates to President General Musharraf's propagated rhetoric of a modern, moderate, and Muslim Pakistan. This resonance perhaps allows liberal intellectuals the space to use media outlets to promote agendas of diverse freedoms and tolerance without the fear of state censorship.

The long-term implications of this tentative cultural alliance between liberals and the Military junta require a detailed discussion and analysis that cannot be provided here. However, in conclusion I would raise another politically important question that the liberal intelligentsia rarely confronts. As issues of gender equity and tolerant Islam are emphasized in the play, the idiom of this discussion remains within the parameters of high Urdu culture. In this play as in others, the depiction of late nineteenth century North Indian life is depicted as Pakistani Muslim culture and in doing so remains oblivious to extremely vital issues of cultural and linguistic diversity within Pakistan.

Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, Urdu's dominance of the cultural center has bred a sense of exclusion among other linguistic groups (Pashtun, Sindhi, Punjabi, Baluch, among others) hindering the emergence of a national culture that democratically includes the diverse voices and languages present in Pakistani cultural spectrum. Where Geo's *Umrao Jan Ada* tackles the issue of female emancipation using North Indian *ashraf* (respectable Muslim elite) culture, it addresses an audience that is also culturally steeped in other traditions, vernaculars, and cultural ethos. The imposition of nineteenth century high Urdu culture, though in this case ostensibly well meaning, retains within it the hegemonic aspect of centralizing state projects of cultural homogeneity which have continued to undermine the rights of the various linguistic and cultural groups that constitute Pakistan. In this sense the liberal feminist agenda in its attempt to re-interpret "tradition" and Muslim social practice in South Asia, may still be entangled in modernist projects where experiences of specific linguistic groups who have a longer urban history (as in the case with Urdu speakers) takes precedence over practices of other ethnicities. A more inclusive cultural politics may yet require a sensitivity toward the diverse histories of the various peoples who inhabit Pakistan.

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Poster from Pakistani TV Serial, *Umrao Jan Ada*

Kamran Asdar Ali is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology, University of Texas, Austin, and Visiting Fellow at ISIM (2005).
E-mail: k.ali@isim.nl

Notes

1. V. Oldenburg, "Lifestyles as Resistance: The Courtesans of Lucknow," in *Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia,* ed. Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), 23-61.
2. Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press,1998), 5.
3. Afsaneh Najmabadi eloquently details similar processes in turn of the century Iran, where processes of social modernity linked to new schools for girls and the new press transformed women's language and the domestic sphere in "Veiled Discourse, Unveiled Body," *Feminist Studies* 19, no.3 (1993): 487-51.

Bahibb Issima
Copts & the Public Sphere

SAMIA MEHREZ

Egypt's Coptic community emerged dramatically onto the public sphere with the release of the film *Bahibb Issima* in the summer of 2004. The film's depiction of Copts has created a national conversation between Copts and Muslims with the latter realizing not only how little they know about the Copts, but about how strikingly similar the two communities actually are. The film's realism has been met with contestation from orthodox factions within the Coptic community while the State's ability to control the representation of Copts in the public sphere has been challenged by the filmmakers themselves.

The recent Egyptian controversial film *Bahibb Issima* (I Love Cinema) directed by Osama Fawzi and written by Hani Fawzi (two young and already distinguished Coptic filmmakers) has triggered an ongoing heated debate of national proportion. The film propelled the Egyptian Coptic community, the largest religious minority who make up anywhere between 6%-10% of the population, into the very heart of the public sphere. It has also confirmed the Coptic community as a new player in the cultural politics in Egypt, a challenging new force for the Egyptian State to contend with in the latter's balancing act of secularism and religious nationalism.

Many elements have converged to re-orient and perhaps re-define both the relationship between the Egyptian state and the Coptic community since the 1990's, as well as the marginal space that the Coptic community has traditionally occupied in the Egyptian public sphere. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism was accompanied by Coptic fundamentalism during the Sadat era. The ensuing, and perhaps unprecedented, bloody clashes during the 1980's and 1990's between Muslims and Copts (with the latter paying the highest toll in lives and persecution), together with the state's repeated and scandalous mishandling of these crises, have totally exposed the dangers of the Egyptian state's practices towards the Coptic community. The regime's inadequate responses to sectarian violence has also called into question its long standing and flimsy official banner of national unity "*yahya l-hilal ma'a ssalib*," (Long live the Crescent alongside the Cross) and exposed to public scrutiny its attempts to cultivate a dual image of secularism (for global consumption) and religious nationalism (for the local one). All this coincided with the birth of the human rights movement in Egypt that started in 1982, as well as the Egyptian state's increasingly compromising economic and political dependence on the blessings of the United States.

It is precisely the State's anxious intervention to control the *kind* of image produced of the Copts that has enabled the Coptic community to become a real and active participant in the public sphere.

In response to this complex situation, the Egyptian state stepped up its efforts to appear conciliatory towards the Copts; it has remedied the representation of Coptic history in educational curricula, accorded a national holiday for Coptic Christmas, and more importantly, but with more contentious and controversial results, has taken upon itself television and film representations of the Coptic community. Most, if not all, such representations have been didactic and aimed at propagating "national unity" to the detriment of a realistic non-stereotypical image of the Copt. The irony remains, however, that it has been precisely the State's anxious intervention to control the *kind* of image produced of the Copts that has enabled the Coptic community to become a real and active participant in the public sphere.

Bahibb Issima is by far the most radical example of the Coptic community's engagement in and with the public sphere. Its audacious realism was met with contestation from the more orthodox factions within the Coptic community. *Bahibb Issima* has also entered the labyrinth of State censorship and has ended up in the Egyptian courts for "contempt of religion." Based largely on autobiographical elements, *Bahibb Issima* focuses, in an unprecedented way, on the daily life of a Coptic middle class family from the point of view of Naeem, the youngest child in the family. Naeem, like one of his young uncles, loves cinema but is deprived of it because of his father's fundamentalist religious views. Naeem rebels against his father and ends up blackmailing the adults into taking him to the movie theatre. *Bahibb Issima* opens with a highly dramatic scene in which Adli, the fundamentalist Coptic father who reviles all forms of art, threatens little Naeem with Hell for his love for cinema. This initial patriarchal image that condemns the freedom of the artistic imaginary is juxtaposed against Naeem's imaginings of cinema, in an equally dramatic and phantasmagoric scene, where the child imagines cinema as the gateway to Heaven through which he enters and is greeted by many loving angels. Similarly, the father's cowardly relationship to God that is based exclusively on fear, is juxtaposed against his child's subversion of that constraining relationship, symbolically rendered through Naeem's deliberate public pissing in different authoritarian contexts: at home, in his doctor's clinic, and in the Church. Adli similarly oppresses his wife Nimat whose self-realization is doubly crushed. As a painter, Nimat's artistic talent is thwarted within her marriage as well as within her public role of headmistress in a primary school. As a wife, her physical and emotional desire is thwarted by a fundamentalist orthodox husband who imposes a relationship of chastity within the marriage leading Nimat to "fall" for an extramarital relationship.

As the film progresses, we begin to make links between Adli's oppression of his family in the private sphere and his own oppression in the public one. Set in 1966 during Nasser's increasingly paranoid era, and on the eve of the Arab defeat of 1967, *Bahibb Issima* translates private oppression into a national one. Adli is denounced to the state authorities as "a communist" by his superior for having dared to expose the corruption that he witnesses in the school where he is a social worker. Adli's torture at the hands of the state becomes *the* moment of revelation and reversal in his life. It all culminates in one of the film's most powerful, moving, and loaded scenes: Adli's monologue with God where he tells Him, in his drunken stupor: "I do not love you. I want to love you, not fear you." Adli's discovery of his heart condition finally brings about a total transformation in his relationship with his family: he buys a television set and takes Naeem to the cinema; he makes love to his wife and dismisses her attempt to confess her betrayal. Adli finally dies, in another highly charged scene, as the sun sets, on the very day that Nasser delivers his abdication speech after the Egyptian defeat against Israel in June 1967.

The makers of *Bahibb Issima* have described their film as one that is against all forms of oppression where "cinema" in the title is synonymous to "freedom." Such a declaration represented, from the outset, an open invitation to read the life of the Coptic family on the screen as a national metaphor for all Egyptians, both Copts and Muslims, not only during the sixties (when the film is set) but also in present day Egypt. Moreover, the tyranny that Adli exercises over his young son Naeem who loves cinema but is denied it because it is *haram* i.e. prohibited by religion, is the same tyranny that the Nasser regime exercised over him; the censorship the young child faces at home is simply a reflection of

© BAHIBB ISSIMA, 2004

Scene from *Bahibb Issima*. Adli (actor Mahmoud Hemeida) with his son Naeem (actor Yusuf Osman)

wider forms of institutional oppression: religious, political, social, and cultural.

Because of its unprecedented audacity—social, religious, and political— *Bahibb Issima* was subject to both official State censorship as well as street censorship. As the last of four censorship committees demanded scene cuts before the film's release, a public boycott of the film was orchestrated by members of the Coptic religious authority and the objecting faction within the Coptic community; a campaign that spilled over into the Muslim conservative one. A close look at the scenario of the long-winded censorship procedures undertaken in the case of *Bahibb Issima* is proof enough of the Egyptian State's ability to manipulate and control both the secular and the religious wings of the public sphere. However, the role of the State as the guardian of public morality was contested when 40 Coptic priests and Christian and Muslim lawyers wrote a statement to the General Public Prosecutor on July 5, 2004 protesting the release of *Bahibb Issima* and demanding that legal action be taken against not only the director, the scriptwriter, the actors, the producer, but also the Minister of Culture, the Censor, and the Minister of Interior for "contempt of religion."

The State's ability to control the representation of the Copts in the public sphere was equally challenged by the filmmakers themselves who played a crucial role in defining the parameters of the debate surrounding their film. *Bahibb Issima* aspires to a national, not a sectarian or historically bound, representation. By setting the film in the 1960s and focusing it on an oppressive Coptic father, the film was able to neutralize the State by not representing it in the present, thus winning its silence, if not its support. In addition, the film's attack on Coptic fundamentalism and its ridicule of religious authorities (in one scene a Protestant pastor is beaten during a rowdy family fight in a Church wedding celebration) are complementary to a larger catalogue of State sanctioned attacks on Muslim fundamentalism in the public sphere (TV serials, films, and plays). Furthermore, the filmmakers knew that they could count on the support of the secular cultural players, both Muslim and Copt who, over the past decade have conducted endless battles against both the religious and political authorities to safeguard the receding space accorded them within the public sphere. Finally, these young filmmakers could count on the new rules governing the visual sphere, ones that are above and beyond the immediate control of the State. The film negatives for *Bahibb Issima*, like many other films in the industry today, were developed abroad. Creating a scandal for the Egyptian State was definitely a card to be played in the case of severe censorship especially that the director, Osama Fawzi, repeatedly announced that he would not accept the massacre of his film. In this particular instance, the State had limited leverage especially that *Bahibb Issima* is made by two Copts, about the Coptic community whose situation in Egypt is already under global scrutiny. Last but not least, *Bahibb Issima* is after all a post 9/11 film that came to light at the same time as the ongoing US plan for the "Larger Middle East," "democratization," "reform," and "good governance" in the Arab world. Given the Egyptian state's keenness on a good record, it would have been unwise to be heavy handed with a film that can be used by the State as proof of its openness, secularism, and democratic practices.

But the real victory for *Bahibb Issima* lies with the film's audiences, Coptic and Muslim alike, for whom this magnificently conceived film has placed the question of representation squarely on the table. The new realistic image of the Copt in *Bahibb Issima* has actually created a national conversation between Copts and Muslims with the latter suddenly realizing how little they know about the Coptic faith, traditions, and values. Furthermore, *Bahibb Issima* succeeded, in many instances, in being read as a national metaphor, not just a film about them (the Copts), but about us, all of us Egyptians who identified totally with the freedom loving, mischievous child, Naeem, in his small, daily battles against *the father* simply because he loves cinema.

Samia Mehrez is Associate Professor of Arabic Literature, Department of Arabic Studies, the American University in Cairo.
Email: Samehrez@aucegypt.edu

Fashion among Chinese Muslims

MARIS GILLETTE

In 1999, a Chinese Muslim (Hui) woman who lived in the old Muslim district (Huiminfang) in the city of Xi'an, Northwest China, showed me an outfit she had asked a local tailor to make for her. The long green robe and white headscarf closely resembled the Middle Eastern women's dress known as hijab. My friend, whose name was Lanlan, was very excited about the robe and veil. Lanlan said that she wore the robe and headscarf when she went to pray in the mosque, and when she attended Quranic study classes.

Economic prosperity among Chinese Muslims in Xi'an, China, has led to new forms of consumption. Locals consume goods and fashions that point in three directions: towards traditional China, the modern West, and the modern Arab world. In the past decade some Chinese Muslim (Hui) women have expanded their wardrobes to include Arab-style headscarves and robes. These new clothes allow these women to experiment with creating new public identities as modern Muslims in a country where religion has been associated with backwardness.

When I first met Lanlan in October, 1994, she dressed in western-style blouses, trousers, and sweaters, and kept her head uncovered. She had recently permed her hair, which preoccupied her because she believed that perms were un-Islamic. "Young women have to be fashionable," Lanlan said to me, justifying her choice. "I'm not even forty." Lanlan felt more secure about her hairstyle after she learned that a daughter of a local *ahong* (imam) had also permed her hair. In 1999 the clothes that Lanlan wore at home were not much different than what she had worn in 1994, but she was engaged in new religious activities and had adopted new Middle Eastern-style clothing to wear when she went to the mosque. How should we understand these developments?

New consumption among Chinese Muslims

When I arrived in Xi'an to conduct research among urban Chinese Muslims (Hui) in January 1994, residents of the Muslim district were experiencing economic success as private entrepreneurs. An abundance of new consumer goods were available, and local Muslims were enjoying them. They spent substantial sums of money renovating and constructing mosques, building private homes, and hosting expensive rituals. They purchased new foods, clothing, furniture, vehicles, electronics, dinnerware, and videotapes.

Eighteen months of fieldwork showed me that the consumer practices of local Hui fell into three main categories. First, locals produced, bought, and rented goods that resonated with traditional culture. They rebuilt some mosques in traditional Chinese architectural styles, and made, ate, and sold traditional Hui foods. They also wore certain types of traditional clothing. For example, many elderly women wore Chinese-style tunics and trousers with black knit caps as their daily dress. Second, Xi'an Muslims consumed or imitated goods from North America and Europe. Families built new houses to resemble western apartment buildings and bought new American-style sofa sets. Parents in their mid-forties and older were not likely to follow western fashions or eat western foods themselves, but they bought Nestle's chocolate bars, Coca-cola, and American-style T-shirts for their children. Locals considered these goods to be modern. Consuming them was a way of "catching up" with such "advanced" societies as the United States, Hong Kong, and Europe.

The third category was numerically less significant than the other two, but visually and symbolically striking. Chinese Muslims also consumed and imitated goods from the Middle East. They built new mosques with green onion domes and white tiles. They purchased religious videos and audiotapes from Saudi Arabia. Pilgrims brought dates back from Mecca and distributed them to relatives and friends. A small number of those who had made the hajj wore long robes when they prayed at the mosque. A few female pilgrims and some young girls associated with Wahhabi groups (about 20 percent of residents were Wahhabi) wore headscarves with their blouses and trousers.

In 1994 and 1995, residents called the headscarf *gaitou*, literally "head covering," the same name given to a local hood worn by some Chinese Muslim women. When pressed by me to make a distinction, residents called the headscarves "Arab gaitou." The Arab gaitou occasioned much debate. Several men in their fifties and older told me that the new scarves were less preferable than the traditional hoods. A woman in a Chinese style hood, as one 70 year-old Salafi adherent put it, was "truly beautiful." Many locals also frowned upon the long robes, which they referred to as "desert dress" and "not suited to Chinese conditions." They found the hijab too "extremist" and associated it with Wahhabism.

Chinese Muslim women's clothing styles, including the adoption of Arab dress, are best understood in the context of Chinese modernization. Chinese intellectuals and reformers have debated women's appearance, status, and social roles for more than a century. Photographs from early twentieth-century China show that Chinese Muslims and non-Muslim Chinese shared ideas about proper dress. Men wore long robes. Women wore trousers with tunics and added a skirt if they were from the wealthy classes. All properly dressed men and women, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, covered their heads. Chinese Muslims often wore head coverings resembling those worn by non-Muslim Chinese, which were typically hats. In northwest China, young Chinese Muslim women wore the gaitou.

Fashion trends in modern China

In the early twentieth century Chinese women strove for gender equality and modernization by adopting men's dress and leaving their feet unbound. Radical female students wore men's long robes and left their heads uncovered. The next step in modernizing women's costume was the *qipao* (or *cheongsam*) of 1920s Shanghai, which derived from the garb of elite Manchu women and the male scholar's gown. Modern young women during the twenties and thirties wore qipao with high heels and nylon stockings, and curled their hair in permanent waves. The third option was to wear knee-length skirts with a tunic-like side-fastening top. The latter was first adopted by Chinese women who studied abroad in the West. During the 1920s and 1930s most Chinese found women's short skirts scandalous.

> Imitating the costume, architecture, and eating practices of Arab Muslims has become an important way for local Hui to show their authenticity as Muslims.

The Chinese Communist Party promoted gender and ethnic neutrality in dress after coming to power in 1949. Standardized costume was part of the party's efforts to modify the patriarchal social order, minimize ethnic and class

differences, and expand production by incorporating more women into the work force. For the first thirty years of Communist party rule, men and women usually wore trousers and long-sleeved jackets or shirts. Skirts were rejected as bourgeois, decadent, and demeaning. After 1958, when the party implemented policies to "modernize" religion, head coverings other than workers' caps were castigated as "feudal." In Xi'an the majority of local Muslims quit covering their heads at this time. At most, men and women wore head coverings for worship, removing them in public to avoid censure.

After Mao died in 1976, the Chinese government abandoned collectivization and radical socialist politics and promoted internationalization as the best way to modernize. Chinese women, emulating American and European women's costume and reacting against the enforced gender neutrality and standardization of the Maoist era, quickly adopted skirts. Many young Chinese, including Chinese Muslims, equated wearing skirts with being modern. Nevertheless, most Xi'an Hui Muslims felt that local women should wear trousers, which were thought to be more in accordance with codes of Islamic modesty, and also conformed with traditional and Mao-era practices.

The post-Mao "reform and opening" included an official tolerance of Islam and minority traditions. Some Xi'an Muslims, especially men, the middle-aged, and the elderly, started covering their heads in public. Most Chinese Muslim women did not cover their heads most of the time. This was especially true of working Hui women, particularly those who did not work in a Muslim run business. A number of Hui told me that a head covering would "inconvenience" them at work. Some said that head coverings would make their non-Muslim co-workers uncomfortable. One young working woman claimed she "did not have time" to cover her head. Some young women considered covered heads a sign of how Chinese Muslims were more "feudal" than non-Muslim Chinese.

In 1994 and 1995, Xi'an Hui women and men agreed that a white cap was the most convenient and easiest way for a Muslim to cover her (or his) head. Locals said that women borrowed the practice of wearing a white cap from men's worship hats (*libai maozi*), small round caps that were usually white. Women who planned to visit a mosque or attend a religious ritual carried a white hat in their purses, to put on when the need arose or to lend another woman. When young women wore white hats, as for example at a funeral, they preferred to let some of their hair show underneath the cap.

The class of women most likely to cover their head all of the time was post-menopausal women. Elderly women covered their heads at home and in public, and they covered all their hair. Usually elderly women wore black knit caps or black or brown scarves wrapped tightly around the hair. Those who went often to the mosque wore the gaitou. Post-menopausal women's practice of covering their heads conformed to a general view shared among Chinese Muslims that religion was the provenance of the old. This view was also reflected in those who made the hajj: the vast majority of Hui pilgrims were over fifty.

The Arabization of dress

When Lanlan had her hijab made in 1999, Xi'an Muslims no longer called this kind of veil "gaitou." Their new name was *shajin* or "Saudi kerchief." Over the next five years, the number of women wearing Arab style headscarves increased slowly but steadily. When I revisited the Xi'an Muslim district in September of 2004, the young women who covered their heads almost all wore "Saudi kerchiefs." Veils were almost as common as white caps among women who chose to cover their heads.

One reason that helps explain why more Xi'an Muslims were wearing the Saudi headscarf was the increase in the number of locals who made the pilgrimage. Between 1994 and 2000 the number of pilgrims from the Muslim district doubled, and the numbers have continued to rise each year. Imitating the costume, architecture, and eating practices of Arab Muslims has become an important way for local Hui to show their authenticity as Muslims. The Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, carries a special significance as the originating point of Islam, and many locals conflate contemporary Arab practices with the Islam practised by the Prophet. Xi'an Muslims also admire the prosperity and technological advancement of Saudi Arabia. Locals who made the pilgrimage came home with tales of six lane highways, skyscrapers, and air-conditioned tents.

By wearing a Saudi-style veil, a Xi'an Hui can express a Muslim identity without carrying connotations of being "feudal" or "backward" that a traditional hood might imply. Women who chose Arab-style veils also present themselves as more "authentic" Muslims than Chinese Muslim women who wear white hats or leave their heads uncovered. Lanlan's consumer choices illustrate how local Hui experiment with being modern and Muslim. Lanlan followed new trends whenever she could. She permed her hair as soon as permanent waves were available in Xi'an. She bought new western foods as soon as they appeared on the market, such as the Del Monte creamed corn that she served in 1999. When historic reproductions of late-imperial Chinese style furniture became popular, Lanlan bought a set for her living room. Lanlan's decision to wear the hijab when she prayed must be viewed in relation to these other consumer choices. An Arab-style long robe and veil was another venue for Lanlan to experiment with her (modern) identity.

Over the decade that I have known her, Lanlan has struggled to show that she is a proper Muslim woman by becoming more interested in religion as she ages, and to remain young and participate in Chinese cultural displays of modernization. In 1999, Lanlan chose the "Saudi kerchief" as a way to be simultaneously religious, youthful, and trendy. However, by 2001 Lanlan had stopped studying the Quran and spent less time at the mosque. Busy working in her husband's butchery, she again spent most of her time wearing western-style dress and left her head uncovered. Her decision to wear the hijab was no more and no less enduring than her other consumer choices.

© PHOTO BY MARIS GILLETTE, 1994

Two Chinese Muslim women, Xi'an, China

Maris Gillette is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Haverford College. Her book, *Between Mecca and Beijing: Modernization and Consumption among Urban Chinese Muslims,* was published by Stanford University Press in 2000.
Email: mgillett@haverford.edu

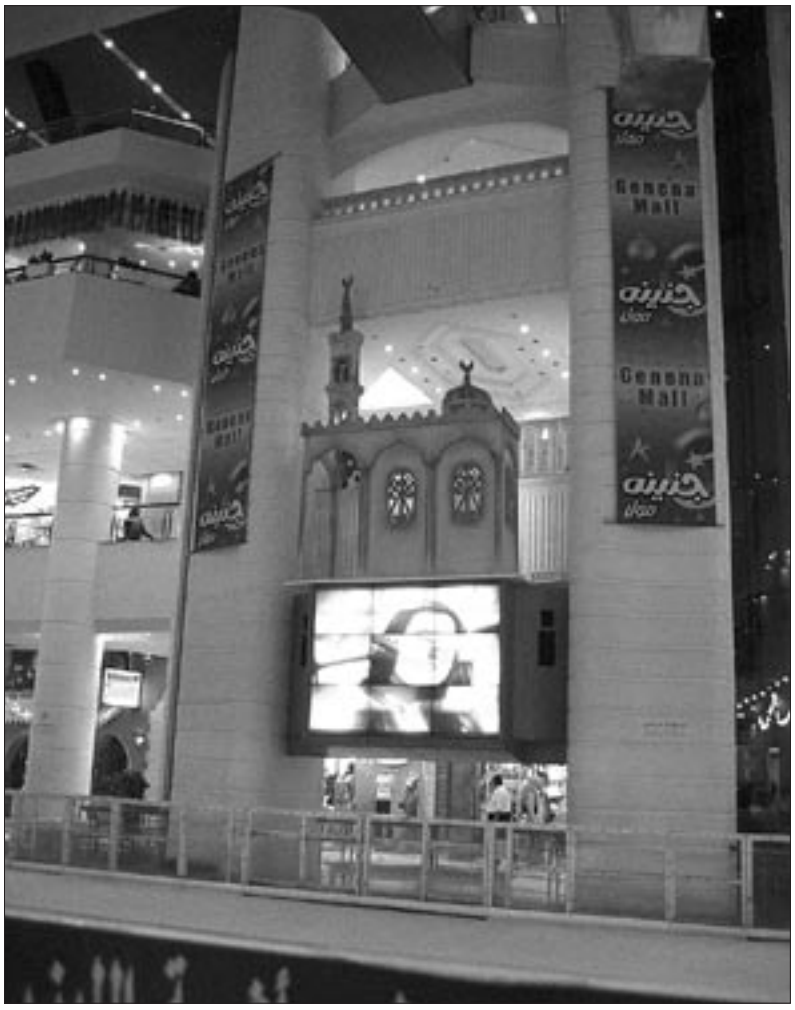
Today's Consumption in Egypt

MONA ABAZA

During the last decade Cairo has witnessed a flowering of shopping malls, ATM and mobile phone use, resort-style recreation, and fast-food consuming, all of which represent a radical departure from previous Egyptian consumer habits. These new behaviours symbolize Egypt's increasing integration into the world capitalist system, if not its growing participation in multiple dimensions of globalization.

For those of us who grew up in Egypt during the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser in the sixties, we can still recall seeing in our households locally produced consumer durables from the Ideal national company. The stoves, refrigerators, metal cupboards, beds, and desks, while aesthetically unattractive, were functional. In keeping with the principle of functionality, the ruling regime adapted Bauhaus architecture, a German invention born out of a situation of scarcity, to solve the housing problem for Egypt's needy. As for cars, middle class families drove locally assembled Fiats. The few who possessed rare imported luxury goods were looked upon as the elite of the sixties. The socialist oriented Nasser regime had led to the creation of middle classes with consumerist attitudes that were somehow fulfilled by the expansion of a bleak local market. During those long years of Nasserite ideology, the middle classes learned frugality as they joined long queues in front of the government co-operatives which distributed oil, soap, rice, meat and chicken, whenever these goods were available.

Sadat's shift of alliance from the Soviet Union to the Western world in the early seventies was followed by the policy of the "open door," or privatization at the expense of the "public sector" state monopolized large-scale industries. The shift from the Nasserite "state capitalist" era to full integration into the world capitalist system went hand in hand with encouraging consumerism and new lifestyles among Egyptians. Despite major changes in consumer habits, consumer studies are still mistakenly considered as a trivial field by most Arab academics. South Asian and Southeast Asian social scientists, in contrast, have developed a much more sophisticated understanding of the interactive processes of consumerism which could inform the research of Arab social scientists.[1] Gendered spaces, youth and religious activism, the problem of scarcity of, and constant struggle over, space in the metropolis of Cairo are issues that have been under-researched. An understanding of how these gentrified and newly constructed spaces are reshaping life-styles of Egyptians, especially middle-class Egyptians, is crucial. The emerging new lifestyles and consumerism in post-Nasserist Egypt demand attention.



Talat Harb Shopping Mall, Cairo

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Globalizing Egypt

Cairo alone boasts twenty-four shopping malls, all of which were constructed since 1989, Yamama Center being the first. They have even appeared in the most remote villages of the Egyptian Delta. Cairo´s supermarkets such as the French mega-store Carrefour, offer everything one can imagine, from household items, food, beverages to ready-made home-delivered meals. ATM cards, almost unheard of some ten years ago, are becoming popular and ATM users are expected to reach around 10, 000 in the next ten years.[2] The acquisition of mobile phones has risen significantly from 200,000 in 1999 to 4.9 million subscribers today, spurring increasing numbers of thefts and pickpockets of mobile phones. The newly created shopping malls, super hypermarkets, and mega-stores in Egypt are indicative of the dramatic transformation of consumption habits.

Fancy restaurants and bars carrying ostentatious names like: La Bodega, Le Morocco, Le Peking, The Cellar, Justine, Villa Rosa, Cortigiani, Le Bistro Provencale, Sangria, Blues, and Casablanca are also multiplying. For the special occasion of Ramadan international five-star hotels like the Hilton, Marriott and Sheraton compete to offer the best *iftars* (the meal signifying the breaking of the fast) and traditional Ramadan evenings with oriental cuisine buffets, patchwork tents, *shishas* (water pipes) and entertainment that might even include whirling dervishes. The coffee shop culture has also become popular for middle class Egyptians. It would be erroneous to believe that this emerged only in the last decade. In fact, the sixties' bourgeoisie had already adopted the café culture of the pre-Nasserite elite. Simonds of Zamalek, an Italian inspired coffee shop, had been the "in" place during the sixties competing with downtown cafés like Groppi, Lapas, the Indian Tea House, which were frequented mainly by Cairo's elderly. These spaces were typical *beau monde* for parading and showing off. Today, the new coffee houses—and they are plenty—offer a mid-way solution for the younger generation of yuppies who can afford to pay for an over-priced drink, croissant, or a sandwich. Middle class Egyptians have in recent years been exposed to the culture of breakfasting on croissants, espresso and cappuccino's, just as they have learned to eat Japanese, Italian, Thai, Indian, Iranian, and Lebanese food, thanks to the proliferation of restaurants that serve international cuisine.

Hybridized architecture and youth leisure

Leisure resorts, secondary residences, and walled and gated communities, such as Qattamiyya Heights and Bev-

erley Hills, have multiplied in Egypt. Advertisements sell a simulated dream of grandiose villas located in new, mainly desert, communities outside the city. They are incorporated in larger condominium complexes that might include a swimming pool, a fitness centre, and, the ultimate, a golf course. In other words, everything that leads to a healthy, luxurious, and suburban life, the counter image to the rotting polluted old Cairo. But the fantasy comes with a hefty price tag! For example, the "de luxe" compound "Star Living" in Nasr City's mega project, Citystars, offers model apartments which sell for $1500-2000 per square metre with the average size of 317 square metres. The two-level penthouses with an area of 1250 square metres sell for an incredible $2.5 million.[3]

Most fascinating is how hybridization in design and architecture is being experimented with in the new gated communities and beach resorts. Al-Gouna resort at the Red Sea, for example, was constructed by the Orascom group, one of the most powerful financial groups in Egypt. The man-made al-Gouna lagoon consists of both an assortment of five-stars hotels and privately owned villas. In a brochure for al-Gouna, the architecture gets advertised as "the blending of tastes, where West meets East." Advertisements display the stylish and sophisticated interiors of the villas which might be decorated according to exotic motifs from India, Indonesia, and Thailand, or to western styles. Architecture, like other aspects of consumer changes, is undergoing global influences in Egypt, but do they represent an emulation or a blending of styles?

At al-Gouna the villa shopper can choose from Italian Tuscany imitations designed by Alfredo Freda to villas with Arab-Islamic accents inspired by the internationally acclaimed Princeton Architect Michael Graves, or pseudo Greek style villas. The "White Villas," designed by the prominent Egyptian architect Shehab Mazhar, emanate a Mediterranean flair. The late Egyptian architect Hassan Fathi, known for his theory of "construction for the poor" advocating the use of authentic traditional designs and local materials such as mud brick, has today been embraced by the new leisurely Egyptian class. Fathi's work had been tremendously inspired by long years spent in studying Nubian art and architecture. Domes, arches, and vaults which were trademark of Fathi's genius revival of traditional architecture are consciously re-popularized in the new resorts and five stars hotels as part and parcel of what Sami Zubaida has called the "folklorization of culture." With a recession taking place and the recent deflation of the Egyptian pound, resorts such as al-Gouna are experiencing real transformation. Large numbers of the new wealthy Russians are purchasing much of the real-estate all along the coast.

Youngsters now have a number of affordable ways to spend time. They could go to the numerous internet cafes, bowling alleys, cinemas, or air-conditioned fast food chains, which are available both, in shopping malls, or as independent spaces. Discotheques and night clubs cater largely to the richer strata. Travel to the Far East has become an exotic tourist destination for the Egyptian rich who discover Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore; international music is widely available, and Arabic music video-clips are becoming increasingly hybridized. Popular satellite channels transmit programs with a "mixing" of, for instance, Indian and Thai dances and landscapes, Egyptian and Gulf young singers, and European and North American tastes and music. Professional belly dancing has attracted a large foreign contingent of Russian, Argentinian, Scottish, Austrian, and American dancers. A local newspaper estimates that nearly 5,000 foreign belly dancers are in Egypt. Curiously, the Russian nationals have the lions share in this profession today. As a result, the government has attempted to nationalize belly dancing by restricting the work permits of foreign dancers.

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El Gouna Resort, Egypt

Fulfillment or frustration?

Does intruding consumer culture, together with its simulative aspect for the poor, serve as an accommodative element with the galloping inflation and growing poverty? Would window shopping and aimless flanerie be sufficient replacements for consuming? Does window shopping, in other words, fulfill dreams or increase frustration? Or, as many have asked, can new consumer possibilities lead to forms of democratization? For example, do mobile phones carry a democratizing effect since, after all, "everybody" can own one? Today porters, maids, cooks, lower grade employees, and taxi drivers carry mobiles. Admittedly, mobile phones have facilitated communication and made life easier for the lower classes who might not even have home phone lines in their shanty housing areas. Mobiles are no longer a luxury item.

After the Egyptian pound was floated in 2003 and led to a nearly 40% inflation, many ask for how long more can the government hold power? One could argue that these sanitized and modern spaces, like shopping malls, serve merely as "clean air conditioned" spaces for escaping the crowded streets of Cairo, flirting, time spending, and possibly, shop lifting according to the recurring complaints of the managers of these malls. But today more than ever, the distinction between the haves and have-nots is flagrantly displayed; the boasting of wealth through consumerism can only sharpen class differences.

Today more than ever, the distinction between the haves and have-nots is flagrantly displayed; the boasting of wealth through consumerism can only sharpen class differences.

Observers acknowledge that the main opposition and forthcoming actors in the political arena will be the Islamists. Would these rising social actors adopt an accommodative attitude towards consumer culture or reject it as a form of West-toxication? The example of the young, new-age style preacher Amr Khaled[4] reflects rather that for young middle class Egyptians most likely, a happy marriage between religion and consumer culture is in the making.

Mona Abaza is Associate Professor at the American University in Cairo.
Email: moabaza@aucegypt.edu

Notes

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Civil Society and the Islamic Experience

MOHAMMED A. BAMYEH

Studies of civil society currently constitute one of the liveliest trends in Islamic studies, especially in the context of the Arab World. These works respond to an intense demand among educated publics and academic circles for any exploration of the democratizing potential of Islam; they also explore the very notion of civil society as a conceptual category.

The vast majority of works containing in their title the term "civil society" or other related items, such as the "public sphere," date from the latter part of the 1990's. The intellectual genealogy of such concepts as "the public sphere" or "civil society" are rooted in European social history, thus they need to be adjusted somewhat when applied to other parts of the world to allow for local and regional histories and experiences. One approach would be to begin with a survey of the subject in question, not with the concept itself. Through such an approach one may reconfigure the concept of "civil society" in ways that are at once appropriate to local circumstances *and* informed by global patterns and trends. What would such a survey look for?

If we think of civil society, in its most general sense, as society organized outside of the state, we can readily identify various corresponding historical lineages and categories of social organization in the Muslim world. Many of those lineages may have little to do with "Islam" as an idea or even as social practice. Rather, they exist in a discursive context where Islam operates generally as a namesake of collective culture. These lineages may include, for example, "tribe," "millet," "family," "urban notables" (*ayan*), "merchants," "colonial bourgeoisie," or the "learned networks" (ulama). Despite overlaps in membership to a given group, each category presupposes a quite distinct social worldview, rules of membership, and patterns of relations to the outside—i.e. to other groups as well as to the state.

An approach of this kind possesses many advantages. First, it frees the very concept of civil society from the specificities of the European bourgeois experience, making it possible to detect different permutations and possibilities within the larger social environs of Islam. Second, it allows for a grounding of civil society in a rich historical matrix rather than positing it as a specific outcome of modernity and thus a mark of a break from the past. Third, it situates the study of civil society within a larger repertoire of existing scholarship which may not explicitly or consciously explore civil society as such. Fourth, it allows a proper appraisal of *non* state-centred social formations and ideas, and as such detects civil society's *sui generis* manner of life, away from the grip of a state-centred "oriental despotism" framework.

Historical genealogies of civil society

Historical categories embodied in such terms as "tribe," "millet," "ayan," and "ulama" help to explain how mores and norms of civic culture evolved when states appeared to most of their subject population as transient, half-legitimate, unpredictable, or self-serving. Under conditions typified by incomplete state diffusion into society—that is, for most of Islamic history—the civic mores governing social and economic life evolved out of patterns of everyday life and remained more negotiable than the usually distant or unaccountable state. Such mores of civic life included not simply minor everyday transactions but also larger questions of "moral authority" and "justice."

Literature in the social history of Islam widely confirms that basic social structures of obligations and reciprocity tended to become less reliable once they reached the level of state politics. One general and persistent expectation was that the state transformed far more the *personality* of those who governed it than the culture and ethics of the population it governed. The expectation that rulers could not be counted upon to fulfil social obligations they otherwise would be beholden to, was basic to Ibn Khaldun's theory of dynastic change. Likewise, the notion that governing was by its very nature "infertile" (*al-mulk aqim*),[1] flowed from the principle that a person could no longer be expected to act in accordance with ordinary ethics or rules of social obligations once he assumed the rule of a state.

The Islamic "mirror of princes" genre confirms the notion that governing a state could not simply be informed by common ethical norms. Basing their work on the experiences of different Islamic states, such varied commentators as Nizam al-Mulk, Ibn al-Muqaffa, At-Tartushi, Ash-Shatibi, or Al-Muradi, all took for granted centuries before the writings of Machiavelli, a principle which in recent times has been traced by Michel Foucault only to Machiavelli, namely the "exteriority of the prince to the principality." The common expectation was that the state had its own *autonomous* ethics, whose autogenesis lay in the logic of the state itself rather than in the prior ethics of any other social category (e.g. tribe or class). The state thus did not flow naturally from social developments; it was parasitic upon society, and the role of religion was in effect to limit its despotism rather than justify it. Richard Bulliet has argued that "Islam" functioned historically in a manner equivalent to that of "the people" in the West, namely as a source of limitation on state power.[2] In a more restricted sense, John Kelsay identified in the

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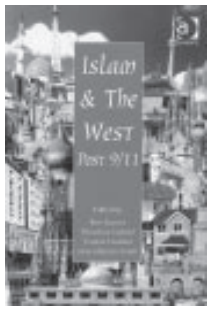

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activity of the ulama a means of limiting despotism—especially in their self-designated role as "heirs" to the prophet, in a different and somewhat balancing way to the idea of the "caliph."[3]

Indeed, the idea that Islam possesses an *inherent* civic character seems to be spurring a flurry of recent studies (e.g. Sohail Hashmi, Abdulaziz Sachedina, Ahmad Moussalli, to highlight just a few), which seek to articulate a theoretical conception of civil society on the bases of classical Islamic traditions rather than European theories. Such approaches are clearly illuminating. However, they frequently miss an important starting point, which involves identifying the basis of historical civil society not so much in "doctrines" as in *social* conditions, settings, requirements, and experiences.

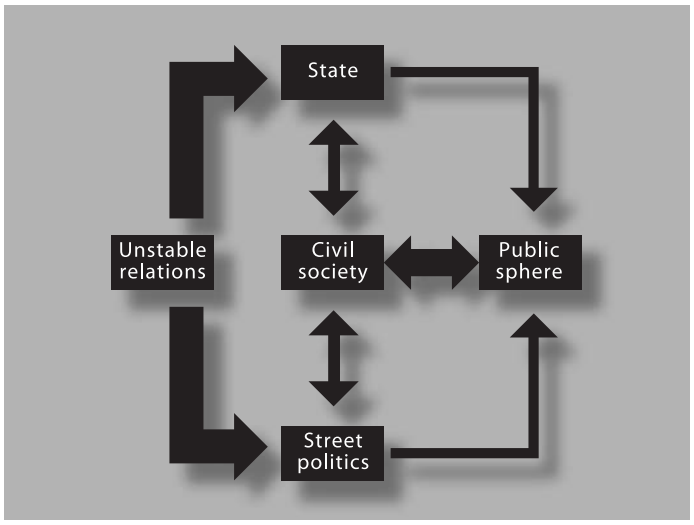
Charting out such social foundations helps us approximate models and parameters of civil society in the Muslim world in ways that are historically informed as well as relevant to the present. If the unrelenting authoritarian hold of the modern Arab state in particular is explained by the fact that the state itself remains contested from within and thus has a reason for paranoia, we may infer that such a state never managed to replace social structures that had been built over centuries and in such a way as to outlast the *contingency of states*. The evolution of modern states in the Middle East required moving directly against three distinct historical principles which were essential to the civic culture of global Islam: namely, the principle of *partial control*; the principle of *free movement*; and the principle of *cultural heteroglossia*[4]. These were precisely the principles that had provided the supportive conditions in Islamic history for the networks, institutions, habits, and practices that at a later point in Europe would be captured as "civil society" by Locke, Hegel, and Tocqueville. Beyond the Islamic experience, these very principles also seem to inform the organizational and ideational logic of the emergent *global* civil society today.

Civil society groups and state building

Voluntary civic life is often deformed by states' efforts at cooptation. An encounter between state and tribe, for example, almost always results in either endangering the existence of the tribe, or in distorting the character and function of the tribe.[5] A revealing exception however is the case of Yemen, where the incomplete diffusion of the state in society meant that tribal life could adjust to the state through a gradual and lengthy process of mutual learning. In Hodeida, for example, the commerce-based, "modern" rationality of city governance emerged out of a "traditional" base rather than in opposition to it.[6] The outcome was flexible tribalism in which the tribe functioned as a voluntary network, with tribal solidarity being exchangeable for, shared or coextensive with other types of group solidarity. This flexibility may in part account for the unique democratic development experienced by Yemen in recent years, in spite of pervasive poverty and a heritage of civil wars. The surviving features of customary tribalism include voluntary association and coexistence of tribal identity with other forms of association. Another includes the extension of tribal ethics of mutual help into diasporic Yemeni networks, stretching from Singapore to the suburban United States. These networks tend to revolve around extended kin, and owe their resilience, it seems, to the absence of obvious alternatives, including state largesse. In many ways, therefore, Yemen exemplifies the path that has so far been most suitable for the maturation of the civic traditions of tribalism *in particular* into the fabric of modern society.

Other categories provide us with different kinds of nuance. The millet system, for example, included features analogous to modern nationalism, notably the notion that certain additional rights could be guaranteed or claimed only through specific forms of association. As it morphed into the modern nation-state, one option for the millet was to seek to evolve into a nation. And at that point it ceased to be an element of civil society. The consequences of this transformation were usually highly unpleasant, as evidenced in the Balkans and the Lebanese civil wars.

The point is that exploring various historical social categories in terms of civil society always reveals dynamics that have great and unexpected implications for public life, and especially regarding what trajectory that category would follow once it is contaminated by statist logic. Some categories have an inherent propensity to remain resolutely autonomous from the state, and it is in such cases that one may chart out the complex negotiations of ordinary social conservatism and the voluntary transformations of civic culture. As one such category the "family," for example, while inhabiting the private sphere, also provides the building materials of the public sphere.[7] Other historical examples include merchant communities, and Shelomoh D. Goitein's seminal work *A Mediterranean Society*, showed how these provided a basis of civic public life. The same can be said of the role of the ayan, who are portrayed in recent studies of urban history to have played a central role in fostering public life, mediating between clients and state, and fostering the embeddedness of their cities in regional urban networks.[8] What is evident from these histories is that the attempted destruction of historic civil societies in the Middle East by modern states, whether through coercion or cooptation, has led to street level politics and violence as the *only* possible politics of opposition, as illustrated below.



Civil society relates to the state in three basic ways: as an element in *democratizing* the state; as a *support* pillar of the state; and as an *alternative* to the state. Civil society can of course oscillate between these roles, even in the same environment and within a short period. But what long-term structures and attitudes survive temporary or contingent oscillations? A survey of the genealogies of civil society in Islamic history would reveal, I suspect, that it was usually the third attitude that defined the long-range view of the state by the actors of civil society. The fact that civil society is now being paraded as a foundation of the democratic state is probably more due to the need to reduce the heavy weight of the state itself rather than to a discovery of an old or natural dynamic.

But once the state's power over and reach within society become again limited—a development that is also contingent on external geopolitical factors and not only on what civil society does—civil society will turn back in its historic form as the natural alternative to a state that can be expected to do nothing for its people and everything for its elites, as it had always done. It took only about three decades after the death of Muhammad for the early Muslim community to discover that harsh fact and readjust its civic life accordingly. When this very old fact regarding the externality of the prince to the principality is highlighted again, civil society in Muslim lands may respond by reasserting itself as a direct participant in world affairs, rather than delegate the task to states which can always be counted upon to act in their own interest and no one else's. It is not government and rulers, but civil society that has always humanized our past, and now it appears, our future.

Mohamed A. Bamyeh is Hubert H. Humphrey Professor of International Studies at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota.
E-mail: bamyeh@macalester.edu

Notes

1. On this point see Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001).
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3. John Kelsay, "Civil Society and Government in Islam," in *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict*, ed. Sohail Hashmi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
4. Mohammed A. Bamyeh, "Global Order and the Historical Structures of *Dar al-Islam*," in *Rethinking Globalism,* ed. Manfred Steger (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2003).
5. See Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds., *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); and Joseph Massad, *Colonial Effects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
6. Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in the Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
7. Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Soraya Altorki, *Women in Saudi Arabia* (New york: Columbia University Press, 1989).
8. For example, Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Phillip Khoury, *Uban Notables and Arab Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); James Reilly, *A Small Town in Syria* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002).

The Reform Nobody Wants Anymore
Iran's Elections

MORAD SAGHAFI

From 11 January 2004, the day the list of acceptable candidates for the seventh parliamentary elections was officially announced, until 2 February, the day that 126 legislators submitted their resignation to show their dissatisfaction with the way these elections were taking place, the Guardian Council (GC) has taken the whole nation as hostage. The GC is a twelve-member body in charge of ensuring that laws voted in parliament are in accordance with the Constitution and Islamic principles. Indeed, not only did the Council disqualify 44% (3533 out of 8145) of the applicants, among them 80 incumbent parliamentarians, but it also effectively disregarded the intervention of the President of the Republic, the Speaker of Parliament, the National Security Council, and even the Leader.

By disqualifying the candidacy of 80 incumbent legislators, Iran's Guardian Council (GC) showed its will to put an end to the reform movement. With a weakened reform movement opposing them, and an international community urging to negotiate with a unique central authority in Iran, the moment was opportune to strike a fatal blow at the electoral system.

In effect, the intervention of the GC in the process of the elections constituted common practice especially after Ayatollah Khomeini's passing from the scene. The height of these interventions however peaked in the last elections. In the past, the GC had disqualified 44% of the candidates during the 1996 parliamentary elections, and intervened in the year 2000 elections by nullifying 700,000 voting ballots in Tehran, which corresponded to more than 20 % of the turnover in the capital. Thus, although the act in itself is not to be considered as an innovation, it could be seen, at least for three different reasons, as an original move. First is the extent of the disqualifications and the people it concerned. Second, is the composition of the final alliance that made the disqualifications possible, and finally, the way the State was treated during the whole affair. How did a coup of this scale become possible? Who were its first and final protagonists? Finally, what are its consequences for Iran?

Against all odds: the Guardian Council

The disqualification of a large number of candidates to the seventh parliamentary elections, including 80 incumbent legislators was immediately followed by a sit-in by 140 legislators, and the threat of an election boycott by the two most important reformist political parties. The sit-in was also followed by the warning of resignation of all of the provincial governors (in charge of the organization of the elections in Iran), and few members of the presidential cabinet.

To calm down the situation, the Security Council issued a communiqué, announcing the creation of a three-member committee, composed of the Defence Minister, the Information Minister and the Director of Voice and Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is to find an honourable solution to the crisis.[1] Unfortunately, neither the sit-in and the threats, nor the three-member committee were able to bend the GC's decision. On 16 January, Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader, convened a high-level meeting to discuss the matter. The President, the Speaker of Parliament, and the Chairman of the GC participated in that meeting, the result of which seemed to be supportive of the reformists. The Leader pressed the GC to revise its position: "If you are in doubt, go by the previous decisions made in earlier cases by yourself and others. Assume the soundness and assume that those who had been elected previously were acceptable." To make himself clear about the incumbent parliamentarians, he again came back on the issue and urged the GC to "act on what was previously accepted …the principle of accepting the previous situation is correct. In my view, and as far as the Majlis deputies are concerned, it is possible to act on this basis." Khamenei also emphasized that in any case the rejection had to be justified by proof.

Nevertheless, the GC did not entirely yield: although 1160 previously disqualified prospective candidates were re-instated, only three incumbent legislators saw their candidacy re-established. Later on, in an open letter published in two daily newspapers, the parliamentarians whose candidacies were rejected questioned the council's defiance of the leader's order. The letter asked suggestively if the GC had not privately received from the Leader himself the authorization to insist on the disqualifications.[2]

While the existence of the Leader's secret approval of the GC's decision could provide the simplest explanation for the council's insistence on its position, it seems rather improbable that the Leader would have accepted to ridicule himself publicly by making a clear proclamation in favour of the incumbent legislators as seen previously. Moreover, the Leader's office has been particularly useful in Iran's political arena in arbitrating the controversies between different factions. By accepting—covertly—the elimination of one faction, while publicly defending its existence he would significantly weaken his own political position. This is actually the reason he intervened so clearly on behalf of maintaining the incumbent legislators' candidacies. Hence, the explanation for the council's unyielding position has to be sought elsewhere.

Ending the reform and its legal basis

By disqualifying the candidacy of 80 incumbent legislators, the GC showed its will to put an end to the reform movement. This decision was most likely taken when the Iranian population showed its dissatisfaction with the reform movement by not voting for the reformist candidates during the second election for local councils, held less than a year earlier. In fact, at the opening of the seventh parliamentary elections campaign, the reform movement was at its lowest level of popularity. The time was most favourable to put a conclusive end not only to the reform movement, but also to the electoral system that was responsible for creating such a movement: an electoral system that although not fully democratic, but open enough to allow individuals from within the inner circle of the Islamic Republic to openly challenge it.

In this battle there was no room for any arbitration: everyone had to choose the council's side. For the same reason, a few days after the GC refused to acknowledge the Leader's recommendation, the two most eminent chiefs of the reform movement, i.e. the President and the Speaker of the Parliament, went to the GC headquarter for a final round of negotiations. Though the content of the negotiations was left unknown, the declaration that followed the meeting showed that both sides stood by their respective positions. Ayatollah Jannati, the GC's Chair declared that the President and the Speaker were convinced of the appropriateness of the GC's disqualifications, a claim which the government denied immediately. The government in turn announced (via its spokesman) its refusal to organize a non-free election, and accordingly asked the Leader to intervene once again. While it was clear that both sides were bluffing, by deferring to the Leader, the government showed its limitations in this last round of a seven-year struggle against the conservatives. On the contrary, by refusing the Leader's demand to reintegrate the incumbent legislators into the process of elec-

tions, the GC showed its determination to overcome any obstacle along its way to achieve its end.

Shall it be concluded that a blatant political error occurred on the part of the government? Was there a miscalculation as to who defines the rules of the game in the Islamic Republic of Iran's political scene? By reviewing Khatami's seven-year record, the answer to both questions is rather negative. Actually, what Khatami did in this final round was in full accordance with what he did during his previous two presidential terms, which was to abide by the Constitution. The Constitution gives the highest responsibility to the Leader. For the same reason, after the resignation of 126 parliamentarians and when the two most important reformist political formations declared their refusal to participate in the upcoming elections, Khatami did nothing but write a letter to the Leader, asking for the deferment of the elections. Again, in the same line of thought, when the Leader advised him not to postpone the elections, he yielded to the Leader's will, giving the Interior Ministry the order to prepare the elections for 20 February.

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Reformist Parliamentarian's sit-in for the eighth day in Parliament, Tehran, 18 January 2004.

The absence of reform supporters

Had the popular supporters of the reform movement stood up more determinedly than they had done during the 22 days of the parliamentarians' sit-in, the GC could not have stood so irrevocably in its position. In reality, despite several appeals from the parliamentarians who occupied the Parliament for more than three weeks, no serious backing came from the society. The day after the sit-in started, in a communiqué, the 126 parliamentarians joined by a few other well-known reformist figures called upon "the intellectuals, academics, students, teachers, and finally all the enlightened and clear-sighted people to understand the seriousness of the situation and to take the responsibility befallen upon them."[3] However, nothing happened. Even students who were in the forefront of the fight against the conservatives during the last seven years took their time in issuing a few ambivalent communiqués.

The students of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* (the most powerful student union and the closest to the reform movement) acknowledged the courage of the parliamentarians, but also criticized them for having lost the confidence of the 30 million people who had brought them to power by waiting seven years before taking such brave actions.[4] In fact, the euphoria of the 1997 presidential elections was gone for good, and a bitter feeling of having been betrayed had already replaced it. As one research has recently remarked, Khatami's election was expected to turn the Islamic Republic's adversaries into the loyal opposition, and the ongoing opposition was to be transformed into supporters. What happened after seven years of quasi-continuous setting back of Khatami in every subject that opposed him to the conservative forces? A large number of his supporters now oppose the idea of a possible reform from within the framework of the actual Constitution of the Islamic Republic, and political forces that wanted to act as the loyal opposition are now acting as open adversaries.[5] Indeed, the Student Union of Amir Kabir University (the second most important student union of the country), while praising the bravery of the parliamentarians, asked if the real point of debate is not whether the actual Constitution gives a real possibility of reform.[6]

The international dynamic

Contrary to the American Government which following the adoption of the "double containment (i.e. containing both Iraq and Iran) policy", cut off its economic relations with Iran, the European Community decided to follow on what they called the "critical dialogue." In this respect, the election of a reformist candidate—M. Khatami—in 1997 as President of the Republic became a blessing for the political line chosen by European countries toward Iran. Seven years later, the reform movement was caught up in endless fights between factions and no significant progress was made neither on the field of civil liberties nor in the economic area. Moreover, there was no clarification regarding the responsibilities of the different government offices, preventing Europe from having a unique negotiating Iranian partner. The confused situation in Afghanistan and Iraq, created by the American invasion, and the world concern about the Middle East nuclear proliferation, convinced the European countries that having a unique negotiating partner in Iran is more important than standing up for the cause of reform in Iran. This is why after a few shy critiques addressed to Iran for holding non-democratic elections, the European community kept quiet and joined the ever-enlarging cluster of those who believe that the reform movement is not worth the backing.

While the reform movement which started with the 1997 elections that brought Mohammad Khatami to power did not fulfill any of its engagements, it however produced one big change in the way politics was practised in the Islamic Republic of Iran: elections became the most important place where the struggle for power had to occur. It was for stopping the expansion of the electoral process as the centre of Iran's political system and thus preventing it from becoming the primary tool for the creation of political authority that the conservative forces, guided by the GC, disqualified more than 40% of the candidates, among them 80 incumbent legislators. With a weakened reform movement opposing them, and an international community urging to negotiate with a unique central authority in Iran, the moment was opportune to strike a fatal blow at the electoral system.

By fiercely opposing the reform movement during seven years, the conservatives reached their aim of annihilating it. The question is no longer whether the political situation of the country could be improved through a reform, or whether Iran will need a constitutional change. The answer is clear: nobody wants the reform anymore. With the blow struck at the electoral process, the question is now whether the agents of change will continue looking at it as a means to create change or whether they will seek other means to this end.

Notes

1. *Shargh*, (Daily newspaper), January 12, 2004.
2. *Shargh*, February 4, 2004.
3. *Shargh*, January 12, 2004.
4. *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*, Communiqué no. 3, not dated.
5. Jahangir Amuzegar, "Khatami: A Folk Hero in Search of Relevance," *Middle East Policy* 11, no.2 (Summer 2004):75. Although the paper lacks impartiality, it summarizes well all the controversies that oppose Khatami to the conservative forces and the weakness of Khatami's political standing.
6. "Communiqué of the Student Union of Amir Kabir's University about the sit-in at the parliament," not dated.

Morad Saghafi is Editor of *Goft-o-gu*, a Persian quarterly on politics, culture, and society, and was Visiting Fellow at the ISIM in 2003.
E-mail: goft_o_gu@yahoo.com

"Pilgrims of Love"
Sufism in a Global World

PNINA WERBNER

I first met Hajji Karim (a pseudonym) in 1987 quite accidentally, while researching Pakistani community politics in Manchester, England. The Central Jami'a mosque, a corporate institution built with voluntary donations in the days when the Muslim community of Manchester was still united, had witnessed a series of factional conflicts over its leadership. A succession of dramatic and sometimes violent confrontations occurred as faction leaders mobilized their supporters. There was no doubting the fierce passions aroused by this competition for honour and status in local diaspora politics.

Sufism contains inherently trans-regional, transnational, and trans-ethnic dimensions. The difficulty in trying to understand Sufism is that in any particular locality there is a wide range of Sufi saints, from major shrines of great antiquity to minor saints with a highly localized clientele. Charting difference and similarity in Sufism as an embodied tradition requires attention beyond mystical, philosophical, and ethical ideas, to the ritual performances and religious organizational patterns that shape Sufi orders.

It was during these heady but often traumatic months of fieldwork that I first encountered Hajji Karim. What struck me from the very start was his air of calm tranquillity. As he began to tell me about his Sufi tariqa and its beliefs, I felt as though I had entered a world of peace and order, of voluntary altruism and deep faith. Unlike the factionalism and conflict-ridden relationships at the mosque, Hajji Karim's universe was one of intellectual and aesthetic speculation and mystical experience, in which people sought transcendence rather than honour and instrumental gain. The order shared many similarities with other regional and pilgrimage cults in South Central Africa and Latin America, in which disciples or adepts follow ritual practices focused around a sacred centre, shrine, or person.

The term regional cult is a comparative, analytic term used to describe centrally focused, non-contiguous religious organizations which extend across boundaries. Regional cults are thus religious organizations built upon periodic ritual mobilizations of followers, in which cult branches, often located well beyond a central lodge or shrine, are linked in a sacred topography through flows of persons, goods, and tributes. Such cults are more far-reaching than any local, parochial cult, yet they are less inclusive in membership and belief than a world religion in its most universal form. The central lodge of the Sufi regional cult I studied in the North West Frontier Province, was connected to hundreds of widely separated branches located throughout Pakistan, from Kashmir to Karachi, and to dozens of branches in Britain and the Gulf, wherever Pakistani migrants had settled.

> Sufi cults are trans-regional, transnational, and trans-ethnic. They…override political boundaries and subdivisions of nations, ethnic groups, or provinces.

As the research progressed over the next twelve years, a series of new and fascinating questions and observations emerged. For example, I discovered that the *'urs* (in Arabic, *mawlid)* celebrations, which commemorate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and Muslim saints, was highly structured. It had a beginning, a middle, and an end. It effected, in other words, a sacred transformation and as such it was a transformative ritual, not merely a festival. The 'urs, was also, it became evident, the organizational hub of a Sufi order, conceived of as a regional (and now global) cult. Even beyond its centralizing role, I found that the 'urs was also significant for understanding the way in which the saintly shrine system in South Asia was interpolated into the Barelvi movement — a religious movement of ulama in South Asia that arose to defend the veneration of saints and their tombs. Barelvis foster extreme adoration of the Prophet Muhammad and advocate his continued "presence." In Pakistan they have their own mosques, schools and religious seminaries for the training of religious clerics. The 'urs helped to explain how, within a loosely inclusive movement, connections between Sufi saints and Barelvi ulama are created and perpetuated. It is through the many thousands of 'urs festivals held annually at shrines and lodges throughout Pakistan, as well as in England and elsewhere, that Sufi regional cults are linked into, and sustain, the wider Barelvi movement.

The transnational and transethnic dimensions of Sufism

Like other regional cults, Sufi cults are trans-regional, transnational, and trans-ethnic. They interpenetrate with one another rather than generating contiguous, bounded territories. They leapfrog across major political and ethnic boundaries, creating their own sacred topographies and flows of goods and people. These override, rather than being congruent with, the political boundaries and subdivisions of nations, ethnic groups, or provinces.

The difficulty in trying to understand Sufism and comprehend its systematic ritual and symbolic logic and organization, is that in any particular locality, there is a wide range of Sufi saints, from major shrines of great antiquity, managed by descendants of the original saintly founder and guardians of his tomb, to minor saints with a highly localized clientele. In any generation, only some outstanding living saints succeed in founding major regional cults which extend widely beyond their immediate locality. Such cult, or *ta'ifas* as Trimingham calls them, "undergo cycles of expansion, stagnation, decay, and even death,"[1] but since there are "thousands of them…new ones [are] continually being formed."[2] Hence, to compare Sufi regional cults across different places, separated by thousands of miles of sea and land and by radically different cultural milieus, is in many senses to seek the global in the local rather than the local in the global. Either way, charting difference and similarity in Sufism as an embodied tradition requires attention beyond mystical, philosophical, and ethical ideas, to the ritual performances and religious organizational patterns that shape Sufi orders focused on a living saint or a dead saint's shrine in widely separated locations.

As the history of Sufism in South Asia and elsewhere (e.g. North Africa, Senegal) shows, Sufi regional cults are inextricably intermeshed in regional politics. The cult's key personnel seek recognition from politicians and administrators while, in turn, they accord legitimacy to these temporal authorities. This dialectics between the political and the sacred in Sufi cults arises because they are not inclusive in the same way as a world religion might be. They foster an exclusive membership based on personal initiation to a particular saintly order, and yet their sacred centres and the major festivals around them are open to all. Relations between initiates are said to be (generic) relations of love and amity, stripped of any prior status, idealized as beyond conflict or division, yet the organization of regional cults is based around the ingathering of elective groups from particular, defined political and administrative communities—villages, towns, city neighbourhoods—while cult relationships are often marred by interpersonal rivalries and jealousies. The egalitarianism between initiates comes alongside internal relations of hierarchy, and all disciples, whatever their rank, are subject to the ab-

solute authority and discipline of the saint or his successors at the cult centre. Indeed, worldly status, class and caste are implicitly recognised at the central lodge, while saintly descendants often vie bitterly for the succession after the decease of the founder. If there is a moment of experienced *communitas* during the annual ritual at a Sufi regional cult centre, it is the product of complex logistical planning, a highly disciplined division-of-labour, and constant vigilance on the part of the organizers.

The 'urs is the organizational nexus of trans-local, regional and global Sufi cult. Such cults are inserted into the broader framework of Sufi orders, such as the Naqshbandi order to which the cult I studied was affiliated.The Sufi cultural concept which best captures the idea of a Sufi region is *wilayat,* a master concept in Sufi terminology, denoting a series of interrelated meanings: (secular) sovereignty over a region, the spiritual dominion of a saint, guardianship, a foreign land, friendship, intimacy with God, and union with the Deity. As a master concept, *wilayat* encapsulates the range of complex ideas defining the charismatic power of a saint—not only over transcendental spaces of mystical knowledge but as sovereign of the terrestrial spaces into which his sacred region extends. The term regional cult, a comparative, analytic term used to describe centrally focused, non-contiguous religious organizations which extend across boundaries, seems particularly apt to capture this symbolic complexity.

PHOTO BY PNINA WERBNER, 2003

Setting off on a procession in Birmingham

Power, charisma, and authority

Unlike the sort of political conflicts that might emerge over leadership of corporately owned central institutions such as the Manchester central mosque, Sufis recognise the absolute authority of a charismatic figure, a Sufi saint. The charismatic living saint at the centre of the cult I studied was known as Zindapir "the living saint." He began his career during the final days of Empire in the British army, as a tailor contractor for the seventh Baluch regiment, and many of his disciples were army men. His beautiful little lodge is located in a valley near Kohat, an army cantonment in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. After establishing his lodge, he continued to recruit army personnel. Over time, as these soldiers retired to their villagers or migrated to work in England or in the Gulf, the catchment area of Zindapir's regional cult increased vastly. Moreover, he deliberately sent his vicegerents to establish branches of the cult in most of the towns and some of the villages of the Frontier, the Punjab, and Sindh. In his later years, he initiated new disciples from among the Afghans living in the refugee camp near the lodge, and thus he now has a following in Afghanistan as well. He provided a *langar,* a free kitchen distributing "pure" food, during the Hajj, organized by the English branch of the cult order, and this attracted additional international followers. He also has branches of the cult in South Africa. Like his *murshid* (Sufi guide), Baba Qasim of Mohra Sharif, located at Muree, north of Islamabad, in the foothills of the Himalayas, his faith was inclusive and trans-ethnic. He was a man of peace.

The love for him felt by his ordinary disciples was a deep wellspring, which supported them in their daily endeavours. Orthodox, reform Sufism, of the kind I studied, which follows the shariah, and self-consciously avoids heterodox practices, is thriving in South Asia today: many of Zindapir's present followers are prominent men in the civil service, the army, the police, and even the government. My meetings with the saint, which usually occurred late at night, resembled intense psychoanalytic sessions in which it was never clear who the healer was, and who the patient. I had early on decided that I would not interrogate the Shaykh. He was far too big a figure and indeed, on the rare occasions when I was tempted to ask him a question, the answer was inevitably aphoristic and enigmatic. Instead, the Shaykh talked and I listened. Now and then he would say something that clearly sparked my interest and, lighting up, he would elaborate on this theme. My main hope was to communicate my friendship and admiration without overstepping any boundaries. This seemed to work, because he called me to him again and again. He also allowed me to witness sessions with his female disciples, and with supplicants. Over time it became evident, however, that my role in the lodge as researcher was never quite clear. I was there to write a book, and the Shaykh supported the research, and yet the Shaykh did not want a book. He was a classic "directing" Shaykh, who wanted the people to come to him, to bask in his grace, not to read about him or admire his picture.

The saint died in 1999, and I attended the first 'urs commemorating his death in 2000. It was a sad event for me, though his followers celebrated his life in death with the usual devotion and pleasure. I missed his delightful, often mischievous, and invariably unpredictable presence. It was a deeply felt absence But I gained many insights from this last visit to the lodge about the cult, its organization, its khalifa, and the organizational continuity following the death of a saint.

The peace that first attracted me to the Zindapir's order did not, to my disappointment, last forever. In particular, Hajji Karim and the order's mosque in Manchester came to be embroiled in internal conflicts of power and authority, which affected my own relationship as a fieldworker with the order's living saint in Britain, the senior khalifa (deputy, vicegerent) of Zindapir. Yet Hajji Karim remains a faithful khalifa of Zindapir's son, now head of the order in Pakistan, and he continues to seek the divine revelation promised by Sufi mystics in their scholarly books, and to believe in the possibility of transcendence.

Notes

1. J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971),179.
2. Ibid. ,172.

Pnina Werbner is Professor of Social Anthropology in the School of Social Relations, Keele University, and author of *Pilgrims of Love: the Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult* (Hurst Publishers and the University of Indiana Press, 2003).
Email: P.Werbner@keele.ac.uk

"Official" Islam in Post-9/11 Mauritania

On commence du zéro, a partir du 11 Septembre on commence du zéro… c'est la vérité! (Hamdan Ould Tah, LMU's Chairman, February 2002)

The "League of Mauritanian Ulama" (LMU) was established in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in 2001. The period between its foundation and the presidential election of 2003 delineates a definite change in the way Islam has been organized in Mauritania. It has become fundamental to incorporate actors not directly related with the official religious hierarchies in religiously focused discussions, and theologians have been approaching religious issues from a centralized state logic.

In Mauritanian television there is a weekly "seminar" (*madarat*) between members of the League of Mauritanian Ulama (LMU) and the so called "modernist professionals," including doctors, engineers, and university professors. The LMU's president, Hamdan Ould Tah, explains that these televised discussions represent "the meeting of modernity with traditionalism" at a time when "we are between two worlds, facing a modernity that doesn't leaves us a very long time to make decisions…." It is no coincidence that such programmes in the mass media, and indeed the founding of the LMU itself, have occurred in a post-9/11 context. The ulama of the LMU are striving to build a religious discourse where the concept of "modernism" is made relevant to everyday life, if religiously rearranged. Although Mauritanian society maintains deep Islamic roots, there are inescapable cultural elements associated with a "foreignness" that are too significant to be overlooked by the ulama. These religious authorities acknowledge that they are not the sole producers and codifiers of knowledge and, in response, acutely try to incorporate the "exterior" or "foreign influenced" elements within their eminent religious sphere, and by so doing re-legitimizing their authority. This is probably one of the fundamental aspects that led to the creation of the LMU, and the justification for this innovative TV programme.

Discussions between members of the ulama and non-religiously trained professionals are indicative of some theological changes taking place in Mauritania. The proposal the LMU is trying to see theologically implemented has to do with a project that the Ulama call "amended Islam," or, an equally valid, "amended modernism." The most visible reform made with this method is the recent "Code du Statut Personnel" (19 July 2001). This civil code which refers to all familial relations including marriage and divorce, has been accepted by diverse social forces in the country whether religious, non-religious, or foreign NGO's. The LMU has also initiated an intercultural discussion, or what might be called dialogues, with "the West." Moreover, this organization has effectively made use of the technology of communications to promote Islam.

The author during fieldwork, Nouakchott, Mauratania, 2004

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Centralizing religion with the telephone

The LMU tries to unify the communication of its religious rulings throughout the country. Religious offices were opened in each regional capital, with every office equipped with a telephone line so that people could directly contact their local *faqih*. The telephone also facilitated a quick distribution of the fatawa (s. fatwa), and for affairs of extraordinary complexity there is the "appeal" telephone of LMU's chairman in Nouakchott. Although the Chairman has an impressive library to draw on for study and reflection, it is actually the telephone that consumes most of his time. These ulama effectively and efficiently use the telephone and their "tele-fatwas" as a convenient means of transmitting their religious jurisdiction. Face to face meetings with the ulama are still valuable, and remain privileged territories, nevertheless, other spaces for communication are becoming important, and this use of the telephone is a significant example.

The LMU is now a nationwide organization, with a nationwide ulama membership. This might lead, for the first time in the history of Mauritania, to a centralized religious structure capable of contouring tribal affiliation and significant differences in religious tradition. These ulama are now able to reach a major part of the population thanks to a strong financial capacity, and because they clearly profit from the utilization of state structures to promote their models.

Alliances with power

The chairman of the LMU stated in 2002 that his organization was "neither outside, nor inside, the state's government." However, a strong association with state power was soon exposed when these ulama took the governmental side in the 2003 presidential campaign, touring the country with the victorious candidate. Earlier, the LMU was considered a powerful religious agent in the centre of political decisions, but not a direct supporter of the government.

After three years of activities the LMU assumed a definitive link with the government and has been attempting to define a centralized religious authority. The LMU has composed a clearly structured Islamic discourse, associating determined religious dogmas (Malikite, Ash'arite) with a declared "national Islamic tradition," where the dialogue with "modernism" and the West are also included. A dual strategy is applied in this new religious mechanism: the use of innovative technology (meant to give a fresh face to the traditional ulama), in addition to holding dialogues with non-religiously trained professionals and groups and organizations from the West. The activities of the LMU can be said to be contributing to a fundamental redefinition of Mauritanian nationality, as the LMU's version of Islam is becoming the state endorsed version. Whether or not the LMU will be successful in associating nationality with its defined and fixed model of Islamic identity is a question still left open.

Francisco Freire is a Ph.D. student at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Departamento de Antropologia.
Email: f.rosa@clix.pt

In Search of a Global Islamic Authority

BETTINA GRÄF

The newly founded *al-Ittihad al-Alami li-Ulama al-Muslimin* (The International Association of Muslim Scholars, IAMS) aims at establishing a "global Islamic authority." The driving force behind the IAMS is Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Qatar based Egyptian scholar, and one of the main players in current Islamic debates.

The *al-Ittihad al-Alami li-Ulama al-Muslimin* (The International Association of Muslim Scholars, IAMS) was founded in July 2004. The founding conference of the IAMS in Dublin was attended by eminent scholars of different religious backgrounds, including Sunni, Shii, Omani Ibadis, and Yemeni Zaydis. Shaykh Yusuf Abdallah al-Qaradawi, the Azhar-educated Egyptian scholar and former member of the Muslim Brotherhood, was elected as president of the IAMS. Muhammad Salim al-Awwa, attorney of the Egyptian Wasat party, became the secretary general, with the former Mauritanian justice minister Abdallah Bayn Bihi, the Shii cleric Ayatollah al-Takhiri, and the Ibadi Shaykh Ahmad al-Khalili as his deputies.

The principle aim of the IAMS is to serve the international community of Muslims and help them safeguard their cultural identity. It also aims to promote moderate Islam by offering an alternative international network to that of militant Islamists. Al-Qaradawi outlined the main characteristics of the new association as being Islamic (representing all Muslims), global (aiming to get its message across the entire world), people-oriented (sustained by the trust of Muslim peoples worldwide), independent (not connected to governments or political parties), scientific (referring to *ilm*, i.e. an association of ulama), missionary (using communicative methods to promote Islam), moderate (eschewing extremism and bigotry), as well as energetic (translating its words into action). The association's basic principle is to apply a "middle way for the Islamic community of the middle" (*al-minhaj al-wasat lil-umma al-wasat*).[1] The founding declaration of the association speaks out against undemocratic rule and calls for the enforcement of equal legislative rights for men and women.[2]

As yet the networking capacity and authority of this collective of ulama is unclear. The association seems to be mainly al-Qaradawi's project and thus far all detailed information on the IAMS to date has been published only via al-Qaradawi's private website.

A global scholar

Clearly, the establishment of the IAMS would not have been possible without the commitment of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, born in Egypt in 1926, living in Qatar since the 1960s, and generously financed by the State of Qatar.[3] The two basic ideas that characterize his work are that of balance (*al-wasatiyya*)—and unity of the umma. Based on the *ummatan wasatan* concept of the Quran (2/143), al-Qaradawi argues for a balanced implementation of Islamic law, meaning both the balance between new and established views as well as between different doctrines. He believes that fatwas (legal opinions) should always be composed "according to the spirit of mediation" and that in doing so one should resort to all legal traditions within Islam. He describes his approach as the "method of the middle way" (*minhaj al-wasatiyya*) which goes beyond a mere juridical context.[4] It implies that the ulama are responsible for the moral guidance of the Islamic community as only they have the necessary expertise to properly interpret Islamic law. Al-Qaradawi stresses that it is the duty of the ulama to make their knowledge public. Consequently, al-Qaradawi is committed through a series of projects for the umma, which he understands as a global Islamic community. Ever since new media allowed, he has been presenting his views to global audiences, accordingly he has been a regular guest on the programme *al-Sharia wa 'l-Hayat* on satellite TV al-Jazeera since 1996, publishes information on his works and activities on his own website since 1998, and promotes the Islamic Internet site, www.islamonline.net, which has become the most popular of its kind. Also, he has been striving to bring together the representatives of Islamic learning worldwide and combine their capacities. He was involved in founding the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) in 1997 and holds it chairmanship. Hence, the establishment of the IAMS is the logical consequence of his vision and his work to date.

Al-Qaradawi's umma

But what connects Muslims to al-Qaradawi's global umma of which the IAMS strives to be its institutionalized authority? What makes him attractive to scholars and lay people alike is his belief in gradual instead of radical reforms and his ability to take up issues of current interest and negotiate them within the scope of an innovative legal discourse delivered into everyday language. However, al-Qaradawi's vision of a united global community of believers is a far cry from Muslim reality, with its myriad of dissenting voices and views. Some viewers of al-Jazeera programme *al-Sharia wa 'l-Hayat* showed scepticism about the IAMS initiative, for instance, concerning the involvement of the Shia and the fact the IAMS was founded in Europe and not in the Muslim world.

It remains to be seen which functions the IAMS will take on and to what extent Muslims in the West and in the Islamic world will make use of its services and recognize the authority claimed by this new institution. Qaradawi's global umma is primarily an imagined political space of scholarship. This space gives Qaradawi and his associates—many of them Egyptians—the opportunity to develop an Islamic discourse of ulama focusing on a non-governmental Islamic union which contrasts with the ideology of the Islamic state of radical Islamists. In addition, this discourse reaches beyond mere legal and religious issues and incorporates the debate on Muslim cultural identity.

Notes

1. *Maqalat*, July 14, 2004, http://www.qaradawi.net.
2. *Nadwat wa mu'tamarat*, July 27, 2004, http://www.qaradawi.net.
3. See for al-Qaradawi's career and ideas, A. Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity* (Berkshire, 1997); B. Stowasser, "Old shaykhs, young women, and the Internet—the rewriting of women's political rights in Islam," *Muslim World* 91 (2001); J. Skovgaard-Petersen, "The global Mufti," in *Globalization and the Muslim World* (Syracuse, NY, 2004).
4. See Y. al-Qaradawi, *Al-Fatwa bayna 'l-indibat wa 'l-tasayyub* (Cairo, 1988); Y. al-Qaradawi, *Fatawa mu^{c}asira*, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1993).

Bettina Gräf is Assistant to the Director at the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies in Berlin and prepares her Ph.D. thesis on "Production and adoption of fatawa in the era of electronic media with reference to the works of Yusuf al-Qaradawi."
E-mail: bettina.graef@rz.hu-berlin.de

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Shaykh Yusuf Abdallah al-Qaradawi

An Imam in France
Tareq Oubrou

ALEXANDRE CAEIRO

Muslim collective identifications in Europe are to a large extent shaped by national dynamics. In France, the call for a French Islam which dominates public debates has forced Muslim leaders to re-position themselves. One of the most intriguing responses has come from Tareq Oubrou. This self-learned imam has been working within the Islamic tradition to establish a *sharia de minorité*, building the premises of a "legal Islam" adapted to the secular context of France and the religious practices of Muslims.

One of the most remarkable developments affecting Islam in Europe are the efforts of secular institutions, state or other, to counter transnational beliefs and practices by promoting national-(ized) forms of Islam. The move, which has parallels in many countries, has been epitomized in France by the famous call for an Islam "de," rather than "en," France.[1] "French Islam" seems to be a *cultural, linguistic*, *political* and *theological* enterprise: Muslims are supposed to adopt French norms, i.e., they are expected to assimilate; Arabic will be stripped to the bare minimum, and Muslim actors and institutions in France will be conversant in Voltaire's language; French Islam will be structured around a single organization, following the hierarchical pattern of the Catholic Church; finally, it will be distinctively "liberal," its Way or sharia *"bien tempérée à la française*,"[2] and perhaps, like other things French, turn out to be an example to the world: *La France, chance de l'islam*. Muslim leaders have responded in different ways to these demands and expectations of the State and the wider society, often reproducing, instrumentalizing, or subverting them for their own purposes.

The Union des organisations islamiques de France (UOIF), a loose franchise of some 200 Islamic associations promoting an orthodox Islam, is an example of a Muslim institution replicating the call for an "Islam de France." Decried as fundamentalist and operating in a climate of public hostility, the UOIF is one of the few Muslim institutions in France that positions itself as a religious authority, rather than a mere representative of Muslims. Following its policy of state recognition, the UOIF has tried to counter fears of its links to the Muslim Brotherhood by publicly distancing itself from Middle-Eastern religious authorities, such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Faysal Mawlawi, and by promoting French-based scholars as its "spiritual references".

Biography of Oubrou

One figure, which has emerged as one of the UOIF's most visible intellectuals, is Tareq Oubrou. Born in Agadir, Morocco, in 1959, in an intellectual milieu distrustful of religious institutions, Oubrou discovered "the intensity of faith" at 18; soon afterwards he came to France in order to pursue his university studies in medicine and biology. In spite of his lack of formal training in religious disciplines, the charismatic young man started officiating as an imam at an early age—in the cities of Bordeaux, Nantes, Limoges, Pau and—since 1991—full-time at Bordeaux's El-Huda Mosque. Now a French citizen, Oubrou leads the prayer, delivers the Friday *khutbah*, interrogates would-be converts, gives religious advice, organizes imam-training seminars, receives journalists and answers social scientists. Although the world Oubrou inhabits is a very different one, the classical description of an Islamic scholar—who "studied, taught, and gave advice"—seems wholly appropriate.

Oubrou is almost unique in France in his attempt to rethink—in the French language—Islam from within. His most distinguished contribution is the concept of *sharia de minorité*, rehearsed at conferences since the mid-1990s, first printed in 1998,[3] and developed in a longer 2004 essay.[4] Three years ago Oubrou also published a series of lively e-mail exchanges with a secular Muslim intellectual, Leila Babès, on freedom, women, and Islam[5]—a rare example of a religious scholar leaving aside his traditional monopoly of interpretation to engage in a discussion with a Muslim social scientist who does not feel bound to the communities of meaning generated around the sacred texts.

Relativizing the sharia

Oubrou engages in his work both the Islamic tradition and wider non-Muslim debates. His starting point is the same as most French observers: is Islam compatible with a secular democracy like France? How can Muslims be integrated? Oubrou's answers seem to be a conditional *yes*: as long as Islamic normativity (sharia) is relativized.

Oubrou's construct could also be called *sharia relative*, unfolding as circles of variances and relativity. First of all, the importance of the normative dimension is minimized by subordinating sharia to theology. For the imam of Bordeaux, the normative approach is predicated upon a hermeneutical posture that tries to decipher the meaning of the Text, which lies hidden in the form of its manifestation during the "Quranic moment." At each point in time the Muslim scholar must search for the adequate equivalence between "the historical destiny" and "the normative will." Given the Quran's "foundational scriptural mutism," Muslim scholars have constructed the science of *usul al-fiqh*. This science, according to Oubrou, is located between the reading of the names and attributes of God on one hand, and *fiqh* (law or jurisprudence) on the other. Since the sharia must "reflect the Legislator," the sharia being "but one name and attribute of God," one cannot know the Law if one ignores the Legislator. This is why, Oubrou concludes, theology is the foundation of sharia. In displacing the normative question into the theological realm (apparently sidelining the traditional fiqh schools), Oubrou argues for the pertinence of broader questions of free will and destiny in elaborations of the sharia: ideas about human freedom have thus consequences on the mechanisms of legal interpretation, allowing for the departure from "the substantial textual limits" in order to achieve "the realization of trans-cultural and trans-historical permanencies." The synthesis must be both intrinsic ("an unchanging Islamic reason, with universal principles") and historical ("since Islamic knowledge renews itself, expands, but also invents itself, in disciplines, techniques, perceptions, processes, and new applications).[6]

The second level of relativity concerns the "ethicization of sharia," reducing Islamic norms to the moral dimension and justifying recourse to French legal institutions. This is built on a distinction within sharia between law (fiqh), which necessitates an Islamic framework, and ethics (*akhlaq*), which does not. Here Oubrou is drawing upon, and resisting, contemporary Islamic thought on Muslim minorities. His carefully-worded *shari'a de minorité* is an implicit critique of the transnational construct of *fiqh al-aqalliyyat* (jurisprudence of minorities),[7] which he considers "an inadequate description of the legal status of Muslims in Europe." If the terminological difference may seem subtle, its applications—in terms of the relationship between Islamic normativity and French/European law—are important: whilst proponents of *fiqh al-aqalliyyat* call for the state recognition of Muslim personal law in Europe on grounds of legal pluralism, Oubrou rids Islam of its claims to legality by proposing to "incorporate French law into the metabolism and the economy of the sharia" through the means of juridical fictions (*fiqh al-hiyyal*). Furthermore, Oubrou universalizes the term "minority"—disagreeable to orthodox French political discourse—by relating it not to a "demographic category" but to a "posture of spatio-temporal exception," devised in France but (arguably) legitimate worldwide.

Devising a "legal" practice of Islam

Given the wide French expectation of an Islamic *aggiornamento* (renewal), it is interesting to note that "reform" is a word virtually absent from Oubrou's writings. Oubrou locates instead his thought firmly in

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Tareq Oubrou

the Islamic tradition. As a mufti, he reflects within limits imposed by his scholastic tradition: he is concerned with adapting Islam to the French context as much as with maintaining the boundaries of legitimate religious authority.

The fatwa emerges as the central mechanism of Oubrou's theory. The classical distinction between *hukm* and *fatwa*, situated at opposite ends of the Islamic normative spectrum, constitutes the third level of relativity of sharia. While the former enunciates the rule, the latter adapts it to the circumstances. In principle, for Oubrou, the fatwa is *auto-biodégradable*, in that "it contains in its very formulation the ingredients and time-space criteria of its validity and life-length." The fatwa adapts Islamic normativity to the social and cultural foundations of the French society. In contrast to some earlier descriptions of the muftiship, which emphasized retreat from the mundane world, the mufti according to Oubrou needs to be geographically and sociologically implicated in his environment, in order to mobilize the appropriate "normative subjectivity." Among the criteria a mufti must fulfil beyond Islamic scholarship, Oubrou cites an accurate perception of the psychological reality of Muslim individuals, a strong grasp of French laws, and an awareness of European legal integration—conditions which would possibly disqualify most of the current practioners in the field.

Contemporary muftis often take into consideration the media impact of their work, choosing between targetting a specific individual and aiming at mass consumption. Oubrou partly echoes this distinction between private/individual and public/collective fatwas, but goes a step further, establishing an original typology of Muslim normative opinions. Oubrou's fatwas are of two types: "positive by articulation" or "negative by omission." Positive fatwas may be directed at a community, in which case they relate to an average level of religiosity—a community which, interestingly, Oubrou defines nationally: French Muslims, and the French [Muslim] national average religious practice (preferably, according to Oubrou, based on a scientific survey!). Or, alternatively, positive fatwas may be "situational," enunciating a norm that takes into consideration not only legal but also social constraints, and is individual in scope. Oubrou elaborates this distinction between legal and social constraints in relation to the problems caused by the visibility of Islam when discussing the building of minarets (*legally* allowed but sometimes *socially* rejected). He must also have had in mind the question of Muslim headscarfs in public schools.

Negative fatwas, on the other hand, should be seen as Oubrou's attempt to counter the proliferation of conflicting fatwas in the European market. Driven by fierce competition between domestic and transnational producers, and enabled by mass media, this market has created the conditions for product diversification, with muftis marketing their—and each other's—work as "authentic," "moderate," "easy," "European." Tareq Oubrou is worried the resulting fatwa wars may lead to a normative saturation and erode all forms of religious authority, including "sincere and benign ones." Negative fatwas seek to break the spiral by refusing to materialize under the pressure of demand or by articulating "anti-fatwas," suspending norms in order to avoid burdening a community of believers already fragilized by its socio-economic condition. This is Oubrou's final degree of relativity of sharia.

Fatwas are Oubrou's tools in the elaboration of a minimalist orthodoxy (a "spiritual minimum wage," as Oubrou puts it) that is sensitive to "the moral state of the local Muslim communities." Hence to a non-practising Muslim Oubrou recommends one prayer a day, while to a youngster who spends the day in worship at the mosque, Oubrou advises he find a job. The *shari'a de minorité* allows the imam of Bordeaux to provide an Islamic cover for new and unorthodox Muslim practices, forging a "legal Islam" adapted to the current situation. This reordering of knowledge inevitably constructs a relation of discursive dominance: here, as in other theological discourses, the aim is not only to reconcile Islamic Law to the secular context, but also—and quite explicitly—to counter the secularization of Islam in Europe, ensuring Muslims remain connected to Islamic normativity as enunciated by authority figures. Seemingly, underlying Oubrou's work, is a much widely-shared distrust of the personalized—and therefore unmonitored and uncontrolled—religious practices of the Muslim individual.

Alexandre Caeiro is a Ph.D. candidate at the ISIM.
E-mail: caeiroa@yahoo.com

Notes

1. Bowen, "Does French Islam have Borders?" *American Anthropologist* 106, no. 1 (March 2004).
2. This expression is borrowed from Jeanne-Hélène Kaltenbach in *L'islam en France*, ed. B. Etienne (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1990), 227.
3. T. Oubrou, "Introduction théorique à la chari'a de minorité," in *Islam de France*, no. 2 (1998).
4. T. Oubrou, "La shari'a de minorité: réflexions pour une intégration légale de l'islam," in *Lectures contemporaines du droit islamique-Europe et monde arabe*, ed. F. Frégosi (Strasbourg: PUS, 2004).
5. L. Babès and T. Oubrou, *Loi d'Allah, loi des hommes—liberté, égalité et femmes en islam* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002).
6. T. Oubrou, "Islam d'Europe: Entre religion minoritaire et message universel," (Lyon, January 2003 (conference with Tariq Ramadan).
7. See Masud, *ISIM Newsletter* 11: 17; Caeiro, *ISIM Newsletter* 12: 26-27; Malik, *ISIM Newsletter* 13: 10-11.

Internet in a Sectarian Islamic Context

THOMAS PIERRET

The Lebanon-based al-Ahbash movement advocates a radical neo-traditionalist version of Sunni Islam. Although numerically modest, it has established branches in several Western countries, where it continues the campaign it started in the Middle East against the Salafi trend. The movement uses the Internet innovatively and demonstrates that the strategic use of web-based interactive communication tools does not necessarily lead to the reinforcement of a culture of dialogue; on the contrary they can also serve as a means to achieve virtual ideological hegemony.

The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (AICP) was founded in Beirut in 1982 by a group of Sunni ulama who, together with their followers, were nicknamed "al-Ahbash" (The Ethiopians) after their Ethiopian-born spiritual leader, the scholar and Sufi Shaykh Abdallah al-Harari al-Habashi. Since its inception, the AICP has been backed by the Syrian regime, which considers its strong commitment to traditional non-political Sunni principles and its insistently anti-Salafi stance as a means to counter the rise of political Islam in Lebanon. However, this radical neo-traditionalist ideology and the paranoid worldview it implies are not exclusively linked to the particular context of Lebanon but constitute a vehicle for an organization that has become transnational by establishing branches in France, Germany, the United States, Australia, and even the Ukraine.

http//:www.talkaboutislam.com, viewed 7 January 2005

As a global but numerically marginal network made up of small groups, often facing hostility of other Sunni communities, the Ahbash have been quick to take advantage of the Internet. The English speaking—i.e. global-oriented—official website of the AICP (www.aicp.org) is dedicated to conventional uses but is rather innovative from a technological point of view. Since the web makes religious material available worldwide at very low cost, the AICP's website provides a wide range of exoteric and esoteric contents through written as well as audio resources, among which is a radio station broadcasting from the Beirut headquarters of the movement and daily interactive religious lessons. A look at the website's Guest Book shows that visitors using this material to improve their Islamic knowledge are not necessarily members of the AICP and sometimes live in regions where the association is not formally present (South Asia, Turkey, Nigeria, and Mindanao). Therefore, one may conclude that the website leads to an extension of the AICP's ideological sphere of influence. However, we need to be somewhat more cautious than Olivier Roy who asserts that, thanks to the Internet, "one directly joins the Sufi neo-brotherhood [among which is al-Ahbash]" and "one can learn the thought of the Shaykh through its discourse and no longer [have to be] in [direct] contact with him."[1] As far as Sufism informs the content of this site, we would suggest that this kind of electronic material is basically more of a showcase for the brotherhood or an aid for the ritual-mystical practices of geographically isolated members. Indeed, visiting a website does not replace the master-disciple relationship, which remains an essential part of Sufism, including that of the Ahbash. Strikingly, Shaykh Abdallah is only surreptitiously referred to on the AICP's websites since, to use Michael Gilsenan's words,[2] the management of the physical absence of the founding saint—who is more than 80 years old and can only travel abroad occasionally to meet his disciples—is still carried out orally by his deputies.

The second function of the Internet for the Ahbash is to improve the global cohesion of the movement by weaving links between grass roots members of the different branches worldwide, all the more so since these branches are established in highly "connected" countries. Of course, such links are not really useful with regard to close and sizeable communities as in Lebanon or France, but they are of invaluable help for isolated individuals living in Australia or North America. It is certainly not a coincidence that the Ahbash's website was the first in the Islamic cyberspace to provide 24-hour voice chat groups in different languages.

Ideological spider webs

At first sight, devices such as live interactive lessons or voice chat groups seem to encourage debates within the movement, but, on the contrary, close examination reveals that these instruments are primarily used by the leadership to increase its ideological control on their followers and to attract new devotees. Similarly, if one checks the AICP's unofficial e-forums (www.talkaboutislam.com), one discovers that they function as ideological spider webs. Nothing points to the fact that these websites, which only present themselves as being "Islamic," are actually part of the Ahbash's cyber network. For instance, they are not related to the official websites by any hypertext link. Therefore, the random visitor is normally unaware that he or she is exposed to a set of selected opinions through carefully controlled debates. Firstly, zealous participants frequently post chapters of books edited in Lebanon by the AICP, but without any reference to the author or the editor. Secondly, veteran members answer questions concerning *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and reprimand novices whose religious knowledge is considered "deviant." Thirdly, a team of regulators supervise the discussions and are in charge of censoring the Ahbash who are too keen to use *takfir* (excommunication)—since such a stance is considered a mark of extremism by most of the Sunnis—but above all of eliminating most of the messages posted by participants of Salafi persuasion. Ideological hegemony is thus achieved by the creation of a neo-traditionalist virtual space in which they assess very critically the ideas of leading Islamic personalities such as Amr Khalid, Khalid al-Jundi and Yusuf al-Qaradawi. In the same way they reduce the Wahhabi doctrine to a mere "heresy" in line with the Ottoman scholarly tradition of which they consider themselves to be the inheritors.

Notes

1. Olivier Roy, *L'Islam mondialisé* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 127.
2. Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt: an Essay in the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

Thomas Pierret is a Ph.D. candidate in Muslim World Politics at Sciences-Po Paris.
E-mail: thomaspierret@yahoo.fr

Timbuktu's First Private Manuscript Library

ASLAM FAROUK-ALLI

The importance of Timbuktu's manuscript legacy for the articulation of a post-colonial African historiography cannot be over-emphasized. This intellectual treasure is slowly being brought into the open through the efforts of local bibliophiles like Abdul Kader Haidara, the first person to establish a private manuscript library in Timbuktu. Haidara is keen to share the legacy with all who show interest in it, firm in the belief that the manuscripts belong to those who are dedicated to their study.

Timbuktu was declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1990. The city and its desert environs are a veritable treasure chest of Arabic manuscripts, produced at the pinnacle of intellectual development between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, and is thus justifiably described as a refuge for righteous and scholarly folk.

Veneration of the written word had found a secure place in the hearts of Timbuktu's inhabitants from very early on. Scholars and lay people alike held fast to whatever manuscripts they came to possess. Today, it is estimated that there are about 300 000 extant manuscripts in circulation in Timbuktu and the surrounding areas. Locked within these pages is one of Africa's greatest intellectual legacies. Fortunately, the keepers of this treasure are extremely committed to their culture of learning and sharing. Through the efforts of these Desert Librarians, this legacy is once again being rediscovered.

The government of Mali had instituted the Ahmed Baba Centre for Documentation and Historical Research, or CEDRAB, as it is generally referred to by its abbreviated French title, in Timbuktu in 1973. The Centre holds about 20 000 manuscripts, collected through the efforts of some outstanding individuals, including Dr Mahmud Zubayr, the Centre's first director, and Abdul Kader Haidara, who started out working for CEDRAB before going on to establish his own private library.

A desert librarian

Abdul Kader joined CEDRAB in 1984 and Zubayr instructed him in the finer points of manuscript classification, cataloguing, and collation. He was later encouraged by Zubayr to travel to the surrounding areas in search of manuscripts. From 1984 to 1987 Abdul Kader spent time in the outer regions. His first destination was a village called Ghurma Rarus, which is about 175km from Timbuktu, deep in the desert. He collected over a thousand manuscripts from there and in most cases paid double the asking price, returning to the area several times thereafter. On every occasion he managed to procure more manuscripts. In 1987 he travelled to Majakoue village and was able to collect about 2000 manuscripts there.

Abdul Kader continued working with CEDRAB until 2002, collecting about 16 000 manuscripts for the centre in the process. He went all over Mali, to villages, towns, desert settlements, even as far as the borders of Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Guinea, Niger, Algeria, and the Ivory Coast. In spite of these tremendous efforts, the centre's 20 000 manuscripts are still a conservative quantity, considering the estimated number of extant manuscripts in the region.

The Mamma Haidara commemorative library

Working for CEDRAB motivated Abdul Kader to start thinking about establishing a memorial library to hold his family's private collection. After leaving the centre he devoted all of his time and energy to this project and was successful in setting up the Mamma Haidara Memorial Library, which was the first of its kind in Mali.

The Haidara family is renowned for its scholars and judges. Abdul Kader's father, Mamma Haidara, was not only a *Qadi* (judge), but also a scholar who taught the classical Islamic sciences like Jurisprudence and Arabic grammar. His personal library dates back to the sixteenth century and is one of the largest and oldest collections in the city.

The library was established by Mamma Haidara's forebear, Mohamed El Mawlud, and was handed down to his descendents, generation after generation. Mamma Haidara added to it substantially, buying manuscripts while studying in Egypt and Sudan. He also studied under local scholars in the village learning centres of Arawan and Boujbeyha, procuring manuscripts there as well.

Abdul Kader began cataloguing his inherited collection and was assisted by the al-Furqan Heritage Foundation in London. Currently four of a projected five volume catalogue of the material has been published.

The importance of the effort of preserving the Timbuktu manuscripts and its potential impact upon the fields of African Studies and African History cannot be over emphasized. Colonial historiography has always held that Africa had few written languages and as such, the only reliable sources of knowledge on the pre-colonial period were archaeology and oral history. However, even these sources were rather tenuous, since archaeological findings may date back thousands of years and oral history may only be able to stretch back about a hundred years. Therefore, the efforts of desert librarians like Abdul Kader Haidara are fundamental to the development of post-colonial historiography in Africa.

Abdul Kader has recently embarked upon a collaborative project with researchers from the University of Cape Town who are studying his collection and have also begun assisting him to digitally preserve it. The Timbuktu-UCT research project is attempting to initiate research that will hopefully transform the prevailing wisdom suggesting that there is no written record of African history on the pre-colonial period.

Manuscripts from a private collection, Timbuktu

PHOTO BY ASLAM FAROUK-ALLI

Aslam Farouk-Alli is a researcher for the Timbuktu-UCT Manuscripts Project and lectures on Islamic studies and Arabic at the University of Cape Town (UCT).
E-mail: afarouk@humanities.uct.ac.za

Public Opinion on Iraq
The Use of Historical Documents

PENELOPE TUSON

In June 1920 a British Member of Parliament asked the Prime Minister in the House of Commons whether it was the Government's intention "to withdraw its troops from Mesopotamia as soon as it has been developed as a self-governing state, able to stand by itself." The brief and non-committal reply, carefully drafted by government officials, was that troops would be withdrawn "as soon as the condition of the country permits."[1] A few months earlier the London Times had complained in an editorial that taxpayers' money was being "squandered in the region of the Tigris and the Euphrates," without any coordinated planning for the future of the country. It was time, said the editorial, for the Government to give an account of its "stewardship," not only in Mesopotamia, but throughout the Middle East.[2]

It is sometimes hard not to read archival sources and wonder whether history does indeed repeat itself. In 1919 and 1920 a vigorous discussion took place within the British government about the future and political prospects of the new Iraq. Outside Whitehall there was also a vociferous and well-informed public debate. Much of this argument can now be read in the British Library in the archives of the former India Office.

As a "counterblast" to these criticisms, the British Government decided to publish a thorough and "easy to read" review of their administration in Iraq, to "show the good work accomplished" during the British occupation since the capture of Basra in 1914. It would highlight civic achievements to counteract the bad news of the disastrous military campaign up to the fall of Baghdad in 1917. And it would clarify British intentions after the Armistice in Europe in November 1918. The review was compiled by British civil and military officials serving in Iraq but it was edited for publication by Gertrude Bell, then "Oriental Secretary" to the British Civil Commissioner and one of the few women ever to occupy such a position in imperial politics. Bell was widely travelled in the region and she was one of the most knowledgeable British officials. She was also to become the most sympathetic to Arab nationalist aspirations. Her review was thorough and wide-ranging and it included a summary history of Iraq under Ottoman rule and an analysis of British policy on revenue, agriculture, irrigation, law, tribal affairs, and much else. The acting Civil Commissioner, Arnold Wilson, thought the publication would be useful for "moulding public opinion at home and abroad."

The "Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia" was published as a Parliamentary *Blue Book* in December 1920. Earlier in the year, at San Remo, Britain was assigned the Mandate to govern the newly-unified region of Iraq and the following March, at the Cairo Conference, Faysal bin Husayn was appointed as the future King. Britain remained in Iraq until its independence in 1932.

Western involvement in the Muslim world

It is tempting and perhaps facile to talk about learning lessons from history. But it is sometimes hard to read archival sources and not wonder whether history does indeed repeat itself. In 1919 and 1920 a vigorous and often acrimonious discussion took place within the British government about the future and political prospects of the new Iraq. Outside Whitehall there was also a vociferous and well-informed public debate. Much of this argument can now be read in the British Library in the archives of the former India Office.[3] The public protests, political responses and subtle interventions of officials and diplomats seem eerily resonant in the context of more recent events. British archival sources on the period after the First World War are full of arguments stemming from conflicting interests and attitudes towards the political and economic importance of the region and the cultural and religious consequences of Western involvement in the Muslim world.

Over the past two decades colonial (or imperial) history and archives have rightly been reappraised as primary sources. We accept that colonial archives by definition reflect the interests and perspectives of the people who produced them. They are often, with some justification, dismissed as white, masculine, and militaristic. In a very important sense they present a skewed and limited vision of the past, silencing people and activities which were marginal to the colonial project. Historians, however, neglect them at their peril. The India Office Records cover over three centuries, from the earliest East India Company trading contacts with Asia to the end of Empire in India in 1947. They contain voluminous information on British interests in India and the wider world of Asia, encompassing a vast proportion of the Muslim world. They include files on British policy towards post-1918 Iraq as well as on British involvement in the region during the previous three hundred years. More importantly, as Gertrude Bell's Review illustrates so well, their very determination to exercise power and influence prompted colonial officials to gather, sift and record as much local information as possible. Working on the assumption that "knowledge is power" they were tireless in their acquisition of linguistic fluency, their intelligence gathering, and their attention to detail.

The archives of the British Indian Empire are unrivalled in their scope and detail as well as in the excitement, recognition and insight they can produce in the reader. They do not teach lessons. But it might be argued that the reports produced at the beginning of the last century contain a range and depth of knowledge which should be required reading for the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. British Library (India Office Records), IOR: L/P&S/10/759
2. *Times* (London), August 14, 1919, IOR:L/P&S/10/752
3. The India Office Records are now part of the Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections of the British Library.

Penelope Tuson is former Curator of Middle East Archives in the British Library. She is author of *Playing the Game: Western Women in Arabia* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2003) and Editor, with Anthony Farrington, of IDC Publishers collections of British Colonial Policy and Intelligence Files on Asia and the Middle East (For more information contact info@idc.nl).
E-mail: pjtuson@aol.com

Religion and Modernity

On the occasion of the 2004 Erasmus Prize, the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation organized a one-day conference on Religion and Modernity in coordination with the ISIM and the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development. The conference was held on 3 November in Park Plaza, Amsterdam.

PHOTO BY INEKE OOSTVEEN, 2004

Abdulkarim Soroush, Sadik Al-Azm, Fatema Mernissi, Amsterdam

Rarely does one get the opportunity to hear three celebrated yet highly diverse speakers interact on a subject of such immense importance as religion and modernity. This full-day conference featured lively debates from the three recipients of the 2004 Erasmus Prize, Abdulkarim Soroush, Iranian historian and philosopher of science and Islamic mysticism dubbed the "Erasmus of Islam," Sadik Al-Azm, Syrian retired professor of Modern European Philosophy and writer on Arab politics, and Fatema Mernissi, Moroccan scholar of political science and advocate of women's rights. All three awardees, in addition to their considerable scholarly contributions, are well known for their roles as public intellectuals. Throughout the conference they ventured into the three general thematic areas: the relationship between Islam and democracy, the impact of the satellite and Internet culture on Islamic identities, and the relationship between secularization and modernity. While their focus was to a large degree on Muslim majority societies in the Middle East, they also raised questions about the position of Muslim and other religious minorities in Europe and the US.

An illustration of the thought-provoking diversity of approaches to religion and modernity can be found in the topic of secularism. Sadik Al-Azm addressed secularism through an analysis of political systems and nation-states. In his discussion of democratization in the Middle East, for example, he pointed out the need for political reform in Arab states and noted that Turkey was the most successful model of a secular, democratic, and "reasonably free" state in the Muslim Middle East. He further underlined that by being granted EU-membership, Turkey would have the necessary support to further develop and mature. Soroush, on the other hand, took a philosophy-centred approach to secularism and social change. He argued that with the demise of rational philosophy in early Islam, Islamic civilization has leaned disproportionately towards law, and has consequently lost its balance. He stressed the need for Muslims to accommodate new theories and ideas and to be flexible in their use of intellectual tools since, "tools are not holy or sacred." Politics and philosophy respectively constituted the paths to democratic social reform.

In her exposition on the potentials of new communication technologies, Fatema Mernissi drew attention to yet other means of democratization. She pointed out how Arab satellite television and the Internet are providing not only an increasingly wider platform for public debate, but setting higher professional standards. She also drew attention to the paradox of how new media in the Arab world serves to forge an Arab identity on the one hand, yet contributes to a more universal or globalized identity on the other.

The conference took an unexpected turn when Sadik Al-Azm, in the spirit of finding solutions to conflicts among Muslims, called for Sunni religious leaderships to apologize to the Shi'a for "that mother of all crimes," the murder of the Prophet's grandson Husayn in Karbala in year 61 (of the Muslim calendar). The distinguished Sunni discussant on his panel, Egyptian professor Nasr Hamid Abou Zayd, turned to his fellow panellist Soroush, a Shi'a, and bowed in apology as they shook hands warmly. If only past wrongs could always be put right with such graciousness lightheartedness.

LINDA HERRERA

ISIM EVENTS

18–19 February 2005

Workshop:
"The Making of Muslim Youths: Youths Politics and Cultures in Muslim Societies and Communities"
Venue: Leiden University
Organizers: ISIM and IIAS
Convenor: Asef Bayat

25 February 2005

ISIM/ IMES Lecture
"Young Muslims in the Netherlands: The Search for a True Islam"
Lecture by Martijn de Koning (ISIM)
Discussant: Thijl Sunier (University of Amsterdam / IMES)
Chair: Lenie Brouwer (Free University Amsterdam)
Venue: University of Amsterdam
Time: 15:00-17:00 hrs

2–3 April 2005

Editorial Board Meeting of ISIM/ Rights at Home Project
Venue: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Convenor: Abdulkader Tayob

15–16 April 2005

Workshop
"Muslim Fashions - Fashionable Muslims"
Venue: University of Amsterdam
Convenor: Annelies Moors

26 April 2005

Inaugural Lecture
Prof. Asef Bayat (ISIM Academic Director and ISIM Chair at Leiden University)
Venue: Academiegebouw, Leiden University
Time: 16:00 hrs

27–28 April 2005

Conference
"Iran on the Move: Social Transformation in the Islamic Republic"
Venue: Leiden University
Organizers: ISIM, Oxford University, & University of Swansea
Convenor: Asef Bayat

16 June 2005

Workshop
"Islam as Religion in African Public Spheres"
Venue: Leiden University
Convenor: Abdulkader Tayob

7–9 July 2005

Conference
"Dissemination of Religious Authority in Indonesia"
Venue: Bogor, Indonesia
Organizers: IIAS & ISIM
Convenor: Martin van Bruinessen and Nico Kaptein

For more information on ISIM events see www.isim.nl

ISIM/AUP BOOK SERIES

ISIM Series at AUP on Contemporary Muslim Societies and Communities

The ISIM has launched a refereed monograph series with Amsterdam University Press (AUP, see www.aup.nl) on social, cultural, and political trends and movements in contemporary Muslim societies and communities. The ISIM Editors invite authors to submit book proposals based on empirical research informed by theories and methodologies from the social sciences and humanities. Guidelines for preparing a book proposal and manuscript are available on www.isim.nl under Publications.
For further information contact the Editors at review@isim.nl.

MARY BAKKER LEAVES ISIM

Mary Bakker will sadly leave the ISIM in March 2005. She has worked for the ISIM from the very start of the institute in 1998 as administrative coordinator, taking care of a wide range of organizational affairs. Mary Bakker studied Indonesian languages and cultures at Leiden University and coordinated the Indonesian-Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies (INIS) before joining the ISIM. Her input has been vital in matters of personnel and budgets, but above all in receiving the many fellows and guests of the ISIM. Her keen sense of detail and warm collegiality will surely be missed. From March onwards Mary Bakker will run Chambres d'Hôtes in France (see www.laroseraiefrance.com).

Challenges Facing Activists

ABDULKADER TAYOB

The Rights at Home Project (R@H) held an Advanced Training Programme (ATP) in Zahle, Lebanon in June and July of 2004. The training focused on challenges and opportunities facing human rights activists in Muslim societies and communities. Trainers and trainees rose to the challenge in an inspiring way.

The overall purpose of the Rights at Home Project (R@H) training in Lebanon was to rethink strategies, theories, and histories of human rights and Islamic legal theory. The training consisted of twelve trainers, 45 trainees, five translators, and support staff led by Mariëtte van Beek. At the helm, Cassandra Balchin kept a close watch on the unfolding programme, and guided it with great sensitivity and firmness. The participants came from Tanzania, Yemen, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Among the most debated issue was the question of the compatibility between human rights and sharia. Some participants felt the need to specifically announce this compatibility while others wanted more information to reinforce their conviction that human rights and Islam were not in conflict with each other. One way of going beyond the deadlocked debate in which Islam and human rights were placed in opposite camps was to find the meaning of both Islam and human rights in their contexts. A considerable looseness was employed in Muslim discourse about what Islam says on any given particular issue. Does Islam allow polygamy? Does it allow a husband to beat his wife? The question to be asked before such questions is who speaks in the name of Islam? How does Islam speak? Is this a convenient way of talking about the values that Muslims hold? Or does "Islamspeak" hide the real actors?

With respect to human rights, it is absolutely clear that subjective positions are imposed on the pronouncements of Islam. A husband may justify beating in the name of Islam. Such positions do not take into consideration other opinions and related Quranic verses and hadiths that temper or condition such behaviour. Speaking in the name of Islam is a shortcut that conceals alternative viewpoints and deliberations. Our legal trainers, Ziba Mir Hosseini, Muhammad Khalid Masud, and Ebrahim Moosa argued in different but complementary ways that the Islamic tradition provides some fundamental resources for thinking and acting on human rights. But accessing these resources in the formative texts like the Quran or legal theory would mean an excavation and reconstruction of previously accepted terms and values.

Trainers emphasized the need for a paradigm shift in how Muslims think about the sharia whose meaning has gone through a number of structural transformations in Islamic history. The latest such transformation was the reformist one (*islahi*) led by Muhammad Abduh and others at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unlike the reformists, our legal trainers thought it was no longer sufficient to declare that Islam was compatible with human rights as it was with science, progress, and economic development. One critical example of rethinking raised at the meeting was the particular way in which marital problems were addressed in some Muslim contexts. Whilst women demanded their rights in the face of abuse, jurists worked with a model that gave absolute prerogative to the husband. At the root of such a privilege lay a marriage contract in which the husband acquired the right of sexual favours for the exchange for maintenance. Such a formula completely ignored the mutuality and companionship of marriage that is emphasized in verses of the Quran. But many jurists and judges do try to resolve failed or dysfunctional marriages with this model. No less than a paradigm shift is essential for rethinking the approach of human rights in Muslim courts and informal religious networks.

Participants also shared experiences and strategies regarding how laws were actually made and implemented in different national contexts ranging from Yemen, Tanzania, and Malaysia. In Tanzania, for example, most of the cases had some connection with the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. To a large extent women contracted the infection from their husbands, or were left destitute and infected in the case of a unilateral divorce. The AIDS epidemic triggered and revealed the social structures and its problems.

A glimpse into law making revealed how values and juridical opinions may or may not become part of a legal heritage. The writing of codes presented lawmakers with the power and the opportunity to include their prejudices and interests into the law. Contemporary legal systems do not simply import verses, hadiths, and legal opinions into legal codes. These have to be reworked into a form that judges and administrators can apply to actual cases. Such reworking provides opportunities for ignoring the rights of women. Thus, for example, rape was unfortunately placed within the ambit of Pakistan's Hudood Ordinance (criminal codes based on the sharia), imported wholesale without critical reflection on the formulations in early sharia. Inflexible legal codes and rigid understandings are often to the detriment of the suffering victims.

The group similarly debated the question of whether there was a chance for implementing "universal" human rights at home whilst political rights were being violated at the local and regional levels? It was almost impossible to talk about rights of individuals in homes without tackling the selective use of human rights as an instrument of political control and interference. The point was forcefully brought home by the fact that the most gruesome violations of rights were being perpetrated on the pretext of a global war on terror in occupied Palestine and Iraq whilst the meeting was being held. The participants highlighted and contemplated the connectedness of all rights, from a woman's individual rights in her home, for example, to her right to a fair trial in a government court.

Despite differences of opinions, interpretations, and priorities, the basic spirit at the meeting where each persons dignity was respected, ensured a successful training programme. The human rights trainers, with little or no background in Islamic legal training, should particularly be credited with nurturing this spirit from the first day. Toni Kassim, Salma Maoulidi, and Suad al-Qadasi with their co-facilitators ensured that human rights were not understood exclusively as social, political, and intellectual goals. They gave us a taste that living human rights demanded, above all, a personal transformation. Legal codes would go a long way to ensure rights in social and political contexts, but it was the appropriate disposition and mindset that could turn societies around. The Rights at Home programme at Zahle touched on some key aspects of human rights in Muslim societies: it stressed the necessity of unmasking tangible and intangible powers behind social, political, and religious structures in societies, and argued that a paradigm shift in thinking about sharia was absolutely essential.

R@H NEWS

From 28 January till 28 February 2005 Salma Maoulidi and Nahda Shehada will be assisting the RaH Project in building materials on the issues of domestic violence, early marriage, inheritance, and women in public life with a special focus on materials in Swahili and Arabic for the Rights at Home website (www.rightsathome.org).

Abdulkader Tayob is ISIM Chair at Radboud University Nijmegen and Project Director of the Rights at Home project.
E-mail: a.tayob@let.ru.nl

Islam and Public Life in Africa

JOSÉ VAN SANTEN

On the occasion of the inaugural lecture of Professor Abdulkader Tayob as ISIM Chair at Radboud University Nijmegen, the ISIM held a conference from 11-12 September 2004 on "Islam and Public Life in Africa" in Berg en Dal, the Netherlands.

The conference "Islam and Public Life in Africa" was convened by Abdulkader Tayob of the ISIM, in coordination with Karin Willemse of Erasmus University, Benjamin Soares of the African Studies Centre in Leiden, and José van Santen of Leiden University. It focused on Islamic discourses of marginal and dominant groups in various parts of Africa. The conference aimed at building on previous meetings supported by ISIM dealing with cross-regional experiences of Muslim societies in different contexts. The various presenters confirmed that religious discourses are an inescapable facet of public life in Africa that reflects varying local and global social and political contexts.

In an early session dealing with publics, Goolam Vahed looked at Muslims in post-apartheid South Africa. He explained how the "rainbow nation" concept put forward by Nelson Mandela in the first decade of the post-apartheid era encouraged Muslim communities to seek their own identities and rights. He raised questions about who—in a still racist context—has control over Islam and whether young active Muslims are part of the older conservative forces, or whether they represent new forms of progress. Switching the context to Senegal, Cheikh Anta Babou examined the originally rural Murid movement as it adapted to urban landscapes, both at home and internationally in Dakar and Saint Louis. Roman Loimeier, with the expressive title "Sit Local, Think Global," described the *baraza*, a veranda or parlour for receiving visitors, of which a second meaning may also be council, reunion or assembly, in public spaces in Zanzibar. Though physically situated in the public space the *baraza* are in actuality only semi-public because they are defined by informal membership and not automatically open to everyone. Loimeier argued that "membership" of a baraza was the precondition for any convincing political programme.

The following session focused on types of reform. Shamil Jeppy and Mohammad Bakari highlighted reformist individuals, respectively Omar Abdullah, a Muslim humanist of the Comores, and Dr. Daoud Mall alias Joseph Perdu. The latter was a Baha'i missionary whose national identity though unknown, nevertheless, was considered an erudite and cosmopolitan Muslim intellectual preacher of Muslim modernism in South Africa. Both presentations, by demonstrating that single individuals can bring together diverse traditions of learning, raised awareness about how Islamic knowledge is promoted, who is allowed to produce such knowledge, and how discourses in particular regions are shaped. For his part, Hassan Mwakimako examined the social and political participation of Muslim women in Kenya. He showed how they entered the public sphere and contributed to the configuration of not just Muslim politics, but also national constitutional discourses through their participation in a process of constitutional review popularly known as *Bomas*.

In a subsequent session focused on conflict, Amidu Sanni presented a paper on "The Role of Youth in the Resurgence of Sharia in Nigeria." He showed how a campaign for the restoration of sharia authority in 1999 was mainly organized by youth from various associations and pressure groups, many of whom had agitated through violent means for sharia implementation. Hamza Mustafa Njozi examined other dimensions of conflict in his paper entitled, "Power and Public Policy in Tanzania from 1964-2004." He raised questions about how pubic policies addressed the "Islamic threat," and whether those policies actually served to deepen not only Muslim resentment and opposition towards the government, but historical discriminatory policies against Muslims as well.

The final session dealt with public communication. Cheich Gueye examined the Muride brotherhood and convincingly argued that the New International Communication Technology (NICT) is, on the one hand, an instrument to integrate Touba as the "ideal" Muride city with the rest of the country, yet on the other hand it serves as a means for gaining broader international presence. The importance of NICTs in the Muride capital, and within the brotherhood, makes it a barometer of social change in Senegal. In another presentation, Hamadou Adama looked at how Islamic communication was institutionalized in post-colonial Cameroon. As Cameroon had inherited a secular order from the former colonial powers, communication over the radio had to be conducted only in official languages. Adama described the tension between those Muslims who were educated in the schools of the colonizers and those who were trained in Islamic sciences in indigenous institutions. The latter were handicapped by their inability to communicate in European languages. In the 1990's the new Islamic organizations had to come up with radically different approaches in terms of how media could be positively used to serve Islamic interests and a wider Muslim community.

Most papers contradicted the often-expressed assumption that African Muslim politics follow models developed in Asia and the Middle East. The conference made it thus once more clear that the African public space is filled with multiple Islamic voices, cultural practices, and identities that are continuously influenced and (re) constructed by national and trans-national movements and various means of communication.

José van Santen is University Lecturer, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Leiden University.
E-mail: Santen@fsw.leidenuniv.nl

NEW FELLOWS

The ISIM welcomes the following new visiting fellows:

Junior Fellows:

– **Na'eem Jeenah**
Political Islam in South Africa and its Contribution to the Discourse of a Fiqh of Minorities
15 January 2005 – 1 April 2005

– **Hameed Agberemi**
Islamism in Southern Nigeria
31 January 2005 – 1 April 2005

– **Saeid Golkar**
Roots of Islamists' Perception of America
1 February 2005 – 1 May 2005

– **Cristina Maria de Castro (CAPES Fellow)**
The Brazilian Muslim Community: A Study of its Identitity towards the New World Reality
1 March 2005 – 1 September 2005

– **Eva Fachrun Nisa**
Politics, Religion, and Muslim Women's Identities: Niqâb and Islamic Fundamentalism in Western Europe
1 March 2005 – 30 April 2005

Senior Fellows:

– **Ali Saeidi**
The Development of Islamic Charities in Modern Iran
1 May 2005 – 1 August 2005

– **Wang Jinglie (KNAW/China Exchange Programme)**
Socio-religious Movements and Social Change in Muslim Societies
1 January 2005 – 1 June 2005

– **Dorothea Schultz**
Islamic Revival, Mass-Mediated Religiosity and the Moral Negotiation of Gender Relations in Urban Mali
1 February 2005 – 1 August 2005

– **Nahda Shehada.**
Iraqi Family Law under Shifting Conditions: Political Contestation and Legal Practices
1 March 2005 – 1 August 2005

Reading Religion and the Religious in Modern Islam

ABDULKADER TAYOB

On 10 September 2004 Abdulkader Tayob, ISIM Chair at Radboud University Nijmegen, presented his inaugural lecture in Nijmegen on the religious dimensions of modern Islam. By looking at religion and the religious, he provided a framework for understanding transformations of modern Islam in all sectors of Muslim societies.

The "religious" has been a largely neglected dimension of modern Islam. Earlier studies by H.A.R. Gibb and W.C. Smith had explored this aspect to some extent, but a sustained debate had been rendered almost impossible by the sheer vastness of the field, and by the even smaller number of specialists in religious studies. Some persistent dismissals by Muslims of religion as an accurate category for Islam have also hindered such a discussion. And yet, particularly in the last two or three decades, the proliferation of religious codes of behaviour in dress, music, and rituals, has been increasing in almost all Muslim societies. Political mobilization in the name of Islam has stepped up, and seems set to continue in the near future. While the form and motivation for turning to Islam might be changing and highly varied, the religious turn itself remains unmistakable.

Recent developments deserve some critical reflection by those in the field of religious studies. Creative applications of the tools of religious studies are needed to highlight dimensions that have been otherwise neglected or marginalized by the perspectives of other social sciences. A close reading of relevant texts and contexts reveals the usefulness of religion as an analytical category. Looking at Islamic developments through the prism of religion would help, in other words, to reveal the particular transformation of Islam in modern societies and also make possible a positive and critical intervention in political and cultural debates in many parts of the world.

Muslim modernists interpret social transformation

From the nineteenth century to the present, Muslim modernists and reformers have tried to develop a contemporary approach to Islam. Whatever the particular position they finally adopted, they had, in one way or another, tried to make sense of the transformation of their societies and the modern world by engaging in a reappraisal of the meaning of Islam as religion. For almost all of these figures, from Sayyid Ahmed Khan to Afghani to Shariati to Soroush, Islam as religion has been a prominent dimension of this rethinking. Readings of Khan and Afghani suggest that at least two well-established approaches were applied to religion. Khan posited an enduring essence of religion together with changing and dispensable characteristics, while Afghani focused on the social and political pragmatics of religion. In their theories of change, religion played a crucial role. Conscious of the need for reform, the need to respond to European political powers and new intellectual challenges, they both used religion in the abstract as a powerful instrument to think through change. Religion created an opportunity for Khan to posit a new foundation for Islam, and for Afghani to justify revolt.

The study of religion has been divided between those who define religion from essentialist and functionalist perspectives. Similarly, Muslim reformers have been divided between those who view Islam as a function for social and political forces, and essentialists who posit a specific value at the heart of religion. However, what is particularly striking about Muslim reformers is their use of these categories not to understand Islam, but rather to transform it. And this points to the fascinating dimension of modern Islamic reformist discourse: in two different ways, the sociological category of religion has been incorporated into the religious discourse. Khan, who represents the essentialist camp, redefined Islam as essence in the context of a scientific paradigm that included immutable laws and careful observations. Afghani's functionalist approach, in contrast, emerged from his political goals and his debate with the critical French public intellectual, Ernest Renan.

The incorporation of religion as a concept into modernist Islamic discourse cannot by itself determine whether Islamic practice is either essentialist or functionalist. But the very presence of these models in religious (in this case Islamic) discourse helps us to appreciate the nature of modernist Islamic discourse itself. Interestingly, religion as a category has not only served reformers keen on transforming Islamic thought and practice; ordinary Muslims as well have made use of the idea of the secular to redefine the meaning of the Islamically religious. Talal Asad has argued convincingly that the "secular" has been an inseparable twin of religion in modern cultural discourse.[1] Thus, it is feasible that the religious-secular pair provides an analytical category for appreciating the particular division of social life. Modern Muslim discourse usually posits the secular as the antithesis of the Islamic.[2] It is within this framework that many Muslims have responded to the secularization of social life. By presenting and stressing the secularist as the polar opposite of the Islamic, the secular has come to occupy a key antipode in the Islamists discourse. However, Asad's thesis of the religious and the secular in a mutual embrace, allows a perception of the secular beyond Islamist discourse.

Ulama and the secular

The ulama organizations have also contributed largely to the formation of this bi-polar discourse. The meaning of the specifically religious has been important for ulama in at least Indonesia, India, and Egypt. In Indonesia and India, they used the idea of the "religious" to articulate their particular role in the society and their particular expertise.[3] In Egypt, however, their approach has been more subtle but worth some reflection. Over a period of a hundred and fifty years, the Egyptian ulama presented themselves as a bulwark against harmful modern influences. Over time, they have redefined their role in society and become moral watchdogs over as many aspects of society as possible. Today, this particular form of Islamization of social ethics is regarded as a reversal of the course of secularization in Egypt, but there is more than meets the eye.

Egypt has experienced some major social transformation during which al-Azhar has had to cede its hegemony in the production of knowledge. Through successive phases of reforms, al-Azhar has had to make space for experts in law, modern science, and education. All attempts to transform al-Azhar to respond creatively to these changes have failed in one way or another. But al-Azhar and its chief representatives managed to reconstruct another role for themselves. As the institution ceded more space to secular experts, it maintained the conviction that Islam as a complete way of life could make a contribution to all fields of life. And the only way that al-Azhar ulama could contribute to society in general was to become its moral guardians. The idea of morality was thus both pervasive and limited; nevertheless, it created an aura through which wholesale secularization and secularism were contained. But the moral voice was clearly a religious counterpart of the secular within society. Al-Azhar experts could only make a contri-

bution to society if they conceded to the secular, and limited their role as the moral overseers of that society, and this is precisely how they could maintain their validity in this discourse. In different contexts, the particular role of the ulama in modern Muslim societies presents us with an excellent example of how the religious and secular mutually define their jurisdictions. The religious and the secular have not manifested as fixed overlays over certain aspects of social life. Rather, the particular political and social contexts determined and guided the articulation of the religious and the secular.

The religious-secular division has a direct impact on the nature of the symbolic in Muslim societies. As an outcome of the division between the secular and the religious, the symbolic has been invested with an excessive religiosity. It is here that the tools of religious studies could also be employed in the understanding of change in Muslim societies. Dress, architecture, food, and landmarks have been invested with diverse symbolic value. On the surface it appears that the religious has had a new lease of life. But the re-appropriation of the religious is never a mimesis. Often it is a dramatic invention. There is no better example of this invention than the role of the modern mosque.

A diverse number of studies have pointed to the rise of the mosque as a prominent site of power and religious significance. In colonial India, for example, the mosque was placed at the centre of Muslim communal identity. It became the symbol of the inviolable right of Muslims. From town planning to religious contestations, Muslim struggles invested the mosque with new significance. They became the pre-eminent sites of resistance against colonial encroachment and communal competition. In some celebrated cases, mosques were even personified in litigation. Sandra Freitag, for example, has pointed to the growing role of the mosque in Muslim public space.[4] Whilst the mosque was not an overtly political space, it provided a site for authority and symbolic representation in the broader social context. The maleness of the site was equally revealing about the new symbolization. The mosque as site of power, even though limited in relation to the modern state, also revealed a self-conscious gendered dimension. The mosque was pre-eminently a site of male religious and social practice.

The ritual production of the gendered mosque was revealed in the large number of texts on women produced in Muslim societies. Moreover, the gendered dimension was emphasized in the exclusion and marginalization of women in these mosques. Both texts and architecture emphasized the special place for women; mainly in their absence from the main areas of the mosques. Women's absence from the mosque was part of the symbolization of the mosque. While the mosque increased in importance with the decline of political power, and received added emphasis from a renewed religious sector, the exclusion of women became particularly pronounced in the ritual elaboration of this all-male space.

This process of symbolization is one example of how the transformation of religious sites and rituals may be approached to gain an understanding of the changes in the concept of Islam as religion. We can look at the reproduction of religious symbols and practices as creative reproductions. Such an approach might deter some crude anachronisms. More importantly, they will help to understand the deeper struggles and contestations taking place in Muslim societies. The tools of religious studies provide an important medium for thinking about contemporary societies, the Muslim being one example. Religion as an abstract category, contrasted with the secular, as Asad correctly argues, is very much part of contemporary societies. The discourses among Muslims reveal the extent to which these categories are replicated in cultural texts and contexts. The study of religion might serve as an objective tool that will reveal the hidden secrets of incorrigibly religious people. It is, however, an instrument that helps researchers be sensitive to the continually reconstructed nature of societies.

Modern societies seem driven to make and remake themselves in relation to religion and the religious as an organizing principle. Beyond its analytical value, the analysis of religion and the religious in modern Islam also takes the debate within Islam from texts to modern contexts. Both sociological and normative debates about Islam, generally speaking, assume changing contexts for a theology (and law) fixed in pre-modernity. The former have provided considerable insights in the many ways in which Islamic values have been contextualized. African Islam, Asian Islam, or Islams in general are a product of this diversity as seen from below.

PHOTO BY JAN VAN TEEFFELEN, 2004

On the other hand, there is considerable debate among Muslims themselves about the correct application and re-appropriation of the past in the present. From this perspective, the modernist can be distinguished from the Islamist who is different from the radical, and the ensuing spectrum of other groups in between. While this debate is ongoing and important, it often ignores the transformation of Islam as religion in the modern period. The impact of Muhammad Abduh or Sayyid Qutb on the discourse need not be measured only against a stable body of texts and values. They need to be seen as important contributions to an ongoing contemporary discourse.

Looking at religion and the religious provides a framework for the transformation of modern Islam. And this framework suggests that all sectors of Muslim societies are engaged in the transformation. This perspective avoids the fallacy of viewing some Muslims as stuck in history, whilst others march into the promise of modernity. The religion angle takes seriously the cumulative tradition of modern choices, failures, and successes. Nonetheless, it does not exclude the value of approaching the history of Muslim societies from other critical perspectives. Reading religion and the religious in modern Islam is about making sense of only one dimension of being Muslim in the modern world.

Abdulkader Tayob holds the ISIM Chair at Radboud University Nijmegen.
E-mail: a.tayob@let.ru.nl

Inaugural Lecture Abdulkader Tayob, Radboud University Nijmegen, 10 September 2004

Notes

1. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity, Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
2. Cf. *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, ed. J. Esposito and A. Tamimi (London: Hurst & Company, 2000).
3. For Indo-Pakistan, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and for Indonesia, Martin Van Bruinessen, "Traditions for the future: the reconstruction of traditionalist discourse within NU," in *Nahdlatul Ulama: Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia*, ed. G. Fealy and G. Barton (Clayton, Australia: Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 1996).
4. Sandra B. Freitag, "The roots of Muslim separatism in South Asia: personal practice and public structure in Kanpur and Bombay," in *Islam, Politics and Social Movements*, ed. E. Burke, III and I. M. Lapidus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

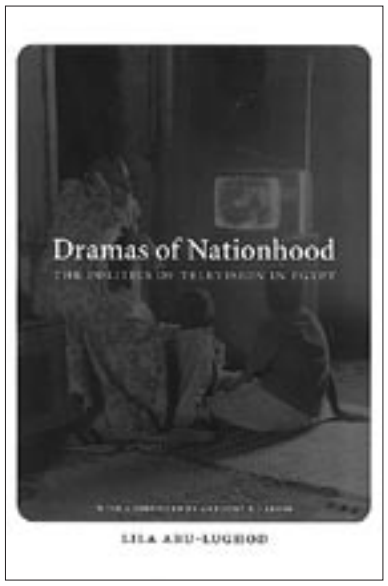
Editors' Picks

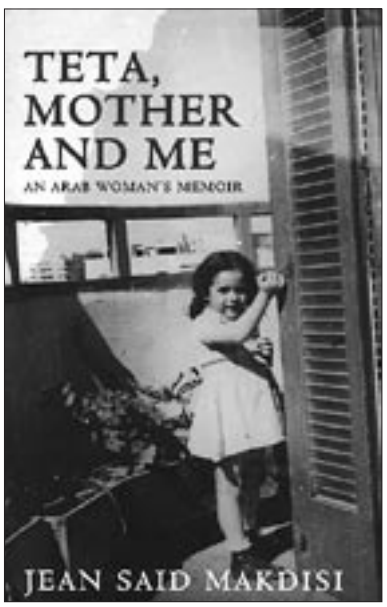
Globalised Islam
The Search for a New Ummah
By Olivier Roy
London: Hurst & Company, 2004

In this innovate book Olivier Roy argues that a schism has emerged between mainstream Islamist movements in the Muslim word and the uprooted militants who strive to establish an imaginary ummah, or Muslim community. He posits that Islamic revival, or "re-Islamisation," results from the efforts of westernized Muslims to assert their identity in a non-Muslim context.

Dramas of Nationhood
The Politics of Television in Egypt
By Lila Abu-Lughod
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005

This compelling work examines television serials as a cultural form that seek to bind together the Egyptian nation. Abu-Lughod shows how serials in Egypt both reflect and attempt to mold social life and political sensibilities about such contentious issues as the place of Islam, the propriety of gender, the value of education and development, and the virtue of consumer desire.





Teta, Mother and Me
An Arab Woman's Memoir
By Jean Said Makdisi
London: Saqi Books, 2005

Set against a backdrop of political upheaval in Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, and the United States, this family history reads as a gendered social history. It chronicles a grandmother's childhood in Ottoman Syria, a mother's experience of urban modernization in the Arab world, and the author's own experience of raising a family in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war.

Islam Embedded
The Historical Developments of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS (1951-2003), Volumes 1 & 2
By Farish A. Noor
Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2004

This impressive history of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the major opposition party in Malaysia, represents a social and political history of independent Malaysia as seen from the margins. It richly documents the party's shift from leftist and communalist phases to various styles of Islamism in the contemporary period.

The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization
By Richard W. Bulliet

This insightful book consists of four essays that deal with the past, present, and possible future of Muslim societies. Bulliet argues that Islam and Christianity have tremendous common roots and history. He envisions a future where Muslim majority countries will have active democracies.

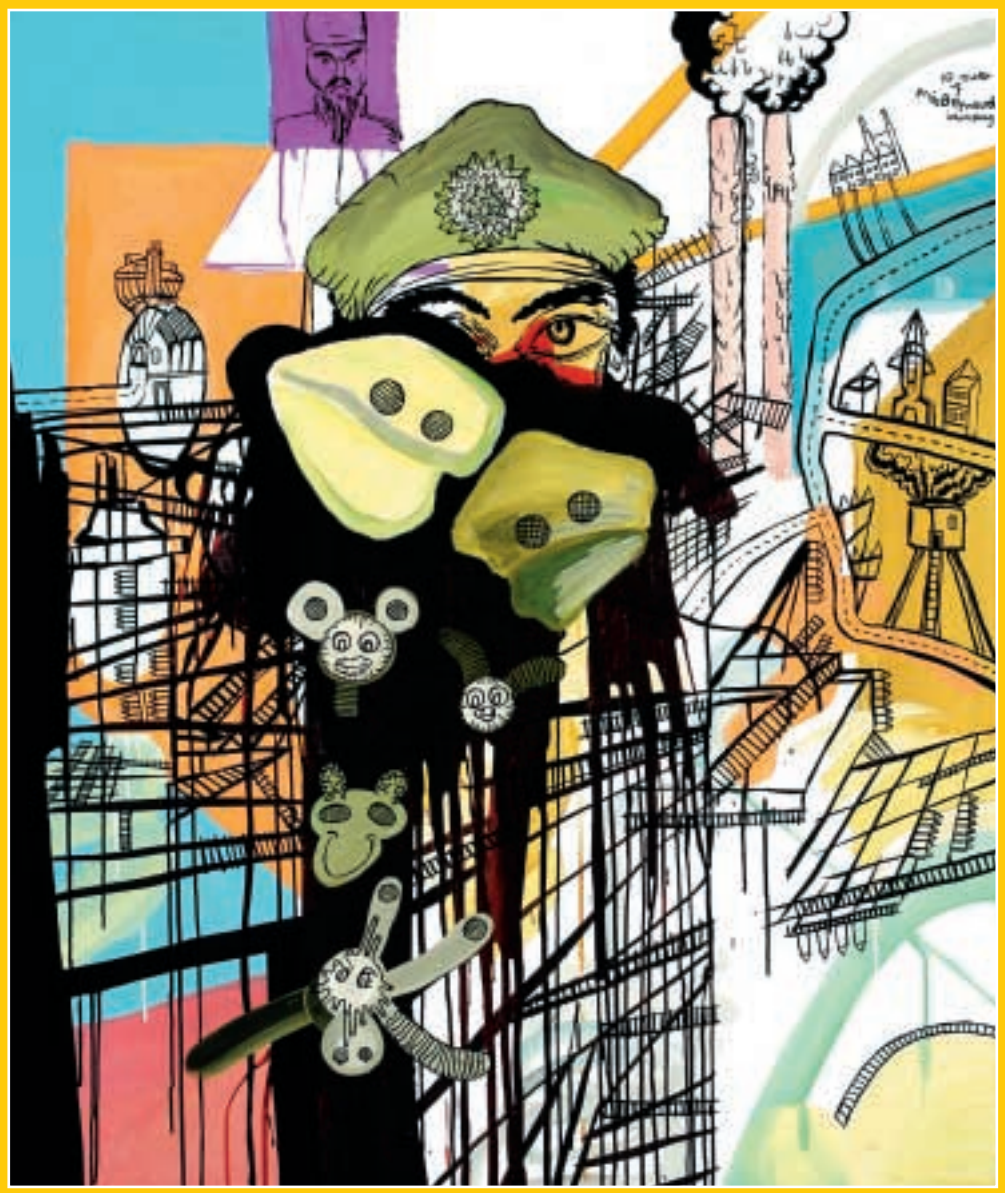
Snow
By Orhan Pamuk
London: Faber and Faber
(Translated from the Turkish by Maureen Freely)

This novel by the Istanbul-based writer tells of Kars, a mysterious city near the Armenian border. Wasting away under the shadow of Europe, the city is consumed by religious and political conspiracies and haunted by silences. This novel evokes the spiritual fragility of the non-Western world, its ambivalence about the godless West, and its fury.

Rachid Ben Ali

The Maroccan-Dutch artist Rachid Ben Ali exhibits recent paintings in the Cobra Museum in Amstelveen (www.cobra-museum.nl). Rachid Ben Ali´s work is born out of two cultures. Often it is crude, passionate, cruel, and homoerotic. The canvases are filled with cartoon type drawings, crudely applied acrylic paint, many dripping streaks, which give the work a sense of great haste and urgency, and are often supplemented by strange, wrongly spelled words and sentences, mainly in English, but sometimes in Dutch and Arabic. As a result a kind of visual narrative full of obsessive associations is created. Personal experiences are mixed in with general concerns like the war, homosexuality and discrimination. It is a highly personal rendering of the complex madness of our age, in which war, violent fundamentalism, displacement, sex, alienation, love and tenderness all play a role.

THE EXHIBITION IS PART OF THE NATIONAL EVENT
'MAROKKONEDERLAND2005'



***Untitled* 2004, Acrylic on linen**

***Untitled* 2003/2004, Acrylic on linen**

***Untitled* 2004, Acrylic on linen**